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NEET grace marks to 1,563 junked, re-exam on 23 June

SC said it will not stay counselling process for admissions

NEW DELHI, 13 JUNE

Centre on Thursday told Supreme Court that the decision to give grace marks to 1,563 NEET-UG, 2024 candidates for admission to MBBS, BDS and others courses has been cancelled and they will be given an option to take a re-test on 23 June.

A vacation bench of justices Vikram Nath and Sandeep Mehta was told by the counsel for the Centre and the National Testing Agency (NTA) that the students, who were given grace marks, will be given an option to take the re-test.

The court said it will not stay the counselling process for admissions.

If the candidates, out of the 1,563, do not wish to take up the retest then their earlier marks, sans the grace marks, will be given for the purposes of the results.

The results of the re-test will be declared on 30 June and the counselling for admission in the MBBS, BDS, other courses will start on July 6, the Centre said.

The number of top rankers in NEET-UG will go down to 61 from 67 , officials said on Thursday.

Six of these 1,563 candidates who appeared in the medical entrance exam from a centre in Haryana had shared the top rank with 61 others.

Students shout slogans during their protest against the irregularities in NEET-UG exam, at Salt Lake area in Kolkata, Thursday; Inset: Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan **PHOTO: PTI**

Taking note of the submissions, the bench said all the pleas, including the one filed by Alakh Pandey, the chief executive of EdTech firm Physics Wallah over the issue of award of grace marks, will be taken up for hearing on 8 July. They also include the petitions seeking cancellation of NEET-UG, 2024 on account of allegation of question paper leaks and other malpractices.

The examination was held by the NTA on 5 May across 4,750 centres and around 24 lakh candidates took it. The results were expected to be declared on 14 June but were announced on 4 June, apparently because the evaluation of the answer sheets got completed earlier.

The allegations such as question paper leak and the grant of grace marks to over 1,500 medical aspirants have led to protests and filing of cases in seven high courts as also the Supreme Court.As many as 67 students scored a perfect 720, unprecedented in the NTA's history, with six from a centre in Haryana's Faridabad figuring in the list, raising suspicions about irregularities.

Meanwhile, Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan on Thursday rejected allegations of paper leak or rigging, saying there is no evidence to substantiate the claims, and accused the Opposition of spreading lies without knowing facts. *—PTI*

>>>More on Pages 2 & 3

IN POCSO CASE

Non-bailable arrest warrant issued against ex-CM BSY

BENGALURU/TUMAKURU, 13 JUNE

A Bengaluru court on Thursday issued a non-bailable arrest warrant against former chief minister and senior BJP leader BS Yediyurappa in a POCSO case.

The Special Investigation Team of the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) had moved the First Fast Track court seeking an arrest warrant against him since he failed to appear for questioning on Wednesday.

Yediyurappa had sought time to join the probe.

The BJP veteran, who is also a member of the party's parliamentary board, is presently in Delhi, and he is likely to join the probe after he returns, sources close to him have said.

Meanwhile, Home Minister G Parameshwara said that he may be arrested if necessary.

According to police, Yediyurappa has been booked based on a complaint by the mother of a 17-year-old girl who alleged that he molested her daughter during a meeting on February two this year, at his residence in Dollars Colony here. The victim's brother had filed a petition in the court earlier this week alleging that though the case was registered on 14 March, no progress has been made in the investigation. The petitioner prayed that Yediyurappa should be arrested and interrogated.

After the Sadashivanagar police registered the case in March, the Karnataka Director General of Police Alok Mohan had issued an order transferring it to the CID for further investigation. *—PTI*

PM reviews security in J&K after 4 terror attacks

NEW DELHI, 13 JUNE

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday asked officials to deploy the "full spectrum of counter-terror capabilities" as he reviewed the situation in Jammu and Kashmir following a spate of terror incidents, including an attack on a bus carrying pilgrims in Reasi district. Fifty people have been detained in connection with the attack. To ensure a comprehensive probe, the search operation to track down the terrorists, has been expanded to cover Reasi district's far-flung Arnas and Mahore areas which were terrorist hotbeds between 1995 and 2005. On Sunday, terrorists opened fire on a bus carrying pilgrims when it was en route to the Mata Vaishno Devi shrine in Katra. *—PTI*

>>>More on Page 3

Bhavani Revanna's car driver, his family assaulted

HASSAN, 13 JUNE

A group of miscreants assaulted Ajith, a car driver of Bhavani Revanna, Prajwal Revanna's mother in Mudalahippe village of Holenaraseepur taluk in Hassan district on Wednesday night. According to reports, at least three individuals are suspected to have broken into Ajith's house and carried out the assault. The assailants forcibly entered the house and assaulted Mohit, who is Ajith's elder sister's son. According to the investigation, the miscreants have attacked the car over Prajwal's sex video scandal. Mohit sustained injuries during the attack and is currently receiving medical treatment at taluk Hospital. *—Salar News*

Lok Sabha to elect its speaker on 26 June

NEW DELHI, 13 JUNE

Lok Sabha will elect its new Speaker on 26 June for which notices for motions supporting candidates can be submitted by members by 12 noon a day prior, the Lok Sabha secretariat said on Thursday. The 18th Lok Sabha will meet for the first time on 24 June and the session will conclude on 3 July. While first two days will be devoted for oath taking of newly-elected members, 26 June 26 has been fixed for the election of the speaker. On 27 June, President Droupadi Murmu will address a joint sitting of Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha. The notice for the motion has to be seconded by a third member. Also, it has to be accompanied by a statement by the candidate contesting the poll. *—PTI*

Contaminated water kills 6 in Tumakuru

TUMAKURU, 13 JUNE

Around six people have died after drinking contaminated water at Chinnenahalli village in Madhugiri taluk of Tumakuru district, Home Minister G Parameshwara said on Thursday after visiting the patients at District Hospital.

Chikkadasappa, 76, and Peddanna, 72, who died at a hospital here on Wednesday, were among the 100-odd people, who fell ill on 10 June, after drinking water supplied from an overhead tank and a drinking-water unit during a village fair, according to officials. In addition, three-year-old Meenakshi, who had been admitted to a private hospital in Madhugiri, also lost her life. These deaths follow the passing of Hanumakka, 85, on 10 June, as well as Nagappa, 85, and Nagamma, 90, on 11 June.

"A temple fair was organised at Chinnenahalli, and there are reports that due to consumption of contaminated water, over a hundred people suffered from vomiting and loose motion. Some of them admitted themselves to private hospitals in Madhugiri, Koratagere and Tumakuru," he said.

On reports that more people, iHe said the village Panchayat Development Officer, V Muniraju, and

waterman, S Nagaraju, have been suspended as they did not take the precautionary measures.

"As per the inquiry done, water connection work was on, and due to damages in the water pipes caused by a JCB (construction equipment), contaminated water got mixed," he said.

More people are still undergoing treatment at the hospital, including children, Parameshwara said.

4 die due to water contamination in Chikkaballapur

Meanwhile, Veerapally village located at Chintamani taluk of Chikkaballapur district also faced a similar crisis related to contaminated water supply with four dying in the past 15 days. The deceased are Gangamma, 70, Muninagamma, 70, Lakshmamma, 70, and Narasimhappa, 75.

Two people remain hospitalised after consuming suspected contaminated water. *—Salar News*

Kuwait: 45 Indians confirmed dead

DUBAI/KUWAIT CITY, 13 JUNE

Kuwaiti authorities have identified the bodies of 45 Indians and three Filipino nationals in the tragic incident, a top official said on Thursday.

At least 49 foreign workers were killed and 50 others injured in the fire on Wednesday at the seven-storey building where 196 migrant workers were staying in the southern city of Mangaf. Meanwhile, a Kuwaiti citizen and several foreigners were arrested on in connection with charges of manslaughter and causing injuries due to negligence in security and safety measures said that authorities.

The efforts are still underway to determine the identity of one remaining body, said Sheikh Fahad Al-Yousuf Al-Sabah, serving as the First Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Interior, and Minister of Defence.

Kuwaiti authorities are conducting DNA tests on the bodies of those killed in the devastating fire incident in southern Kuwait's Mangaf area and an Indian Air Force aircraft is on standby to bring back the mortal remains of Indians killed in the incident, officials said in New Delhi on Thursday. *—PTI*

>>>More on Page 4

Ajit Doval reappointed NSA, PK Mishra to continue as PM's principal secretary

NEW DELHI, 13 JUNE

Spymaster Ajit Doval and seasoned bureaucrat PK Mishra were on Thursday re-appointed to the post of National Security Adviser and principal secretary to Prime Minister Narendra Modi for a fresh five-year term.

With the fresh appointment, Doval has become the first NSA to be appointed to the key post for three consecutive terms.

The Appointments Committee of the Cabinet (ACC) has approved the two appointments with effect from 10 June, 2024, the Personnel Ministry said.

Both Doval and Mishra will be assigned the rank of Cabinet Minister in the Table of Precedence and terms and conditions of their appointment will be notified separately, the Ministry said. Doval, who belongs to the 1968 batch of Indian Police Service, retired as Intelligence Bureau chief in 2005. He was appointed as the NSA for the first time on 30 May, 2014, and re-appointed for another term on 31 May, 2019.

Principal Secretary PK Mishra with Prime Minister Narendra Modi NSA Ajit K Doval **PHOTO: PTI**

During his first tenure, Doval played a pivotal role in the surgical strikes on terror launch pads in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir after the Uri terror attack. *—PTI*

6 DEAD, 1.5K STRANDED IN SIKKIM LANDSLIDE

GANGTOK, 13 JUNE

At least six people were killed and 1,500-odd tourists stranded as massive landslides triggered by incessant rainfall caused devastation in northern Sikkim's Mangan district, officials said on Thursday.

A newly-constructed bailey bridge at Sangkalang collapsed snapping the link between Mangan with Dzongu and Chungthang. Landslides blocked stretches of roads and several houses were inundated or damaged, while electricity poles were swept away, they said.

Towns such as Dzongu, Chungthang, Lachen, and Lachung in Mangan district known for popular tourist spots like Gurudongmar Lake and Yunthang Valley have now been cut off from the rest of the country.

"Three people each died in Pakshep and Ambhithang villages," Mangan District Magistrate Hem Kumar Chettri said.

A number of houses were damaged in Geythang and Nampathang.

A relief camp has been set up at Pakshep for the displaced people, Chettri said.

Mobile network services were affected in North Sikkim even as a request was made by the district administration to send an SDRF team with ration to Mangan. *—PTI*

GOVT ISSUES ADVISORY

Restroom breaks must for girls in exams

NEW DELHI, 13 JUNE

Girl students should be allowed to take necessary restroom breaks during board exams for classes 10 and 12 and free sanitary napkins must be made available at all examination centres, the Union Ministry of Education said in an advisory to schools on Thursday.

Noting that menstrual hygiene management is a significant aspect of a girl's overall wellbeing and should not come in the way of her academic performance, the ministry has issued an advisory for all schools across states and Union Territories, Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE), Kendriya Vidyalaya Sangathan (KVS), and Navodaya Vidyalaya Samiti (NVS).

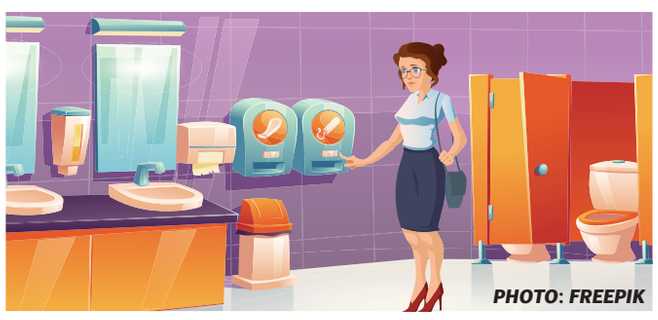


PHOTO: FREEPIK

"Free sanitary pads to be readily available at all class 10 and 12 board examination centres, ensuring girls have access to essential hygiene products during exams, if required. Female students are to be permitted to take necessary restroom breaks to address menstrual needs, alleviating discomfort and promoting focus during exams," the ministry said.

"Educational programmes will be implemented to raise awareness about menstrual health and hygiene among students, teachers, and staff," it added. The ministry has stressed on the importance of treating girl students with dignity and respect regarding their menstrual needs and, at the same time, empowering them to confidently participate in examinations and achieve their academic potential. *—PTI*

SC stays 'Hamare Baarah' release, criticises CBFC

NEW DELHI, 13 JUNE

The Supreme Court on Thursday stayed the 14 June release of Annu Kapoor's movie 'Hamare Baarah' after taking note of allegations that the film is derogatory to the Islamic faith and married Muslim women.

Referring to certain "offensive dialogues" shown in the trailer, the top court expressed its anguish over the Central Board of Film Certification (CBFC) not removing them.

"We have seen the movie trailer in the morning and all the offensive dialogues continue in the trailer... we are convinced that the CBFC, which is the statutory body entrusted under the Act, has failed to do its job," said a vacation bench comprising Justices Vikram Nath and Sandeep Mehta during the brief hearing.

The bench took note of the submissions of lawyer Fauzia Shakil, who represented petitioner Azhar Basha Tamboli, and asked the Bombay High Court to decide the plea expeditiously. *—PTI*

Two teenagers drown in Cauvery at Srirangapatna

MANDYA, 13 JUNE

Two teenagers from Bengaluru and Tamil Nadu drowned near Nimishamba Devi Temple at Ganjam in Srirangapatna on Thursday. Vishal, 19, and Rohan, 17, residents of Bengaluru and Tamil Nadu respectively, had gone to Srirangapatna. Seeing the Cauvery river flowing next to the Nimishamba Devi Temple, the decided to take a dip. Because of monsoon, the flow of the river has increased. Though they did not know swimming, they went into the deep water and this led to both of them drowning. *—PTI*

4 cops booked for assaulting man in custody

TUMAKURU, 13 JUNE

An FIR was registered against Kunigal Deputy Superintendent of Police and three other cops for allegedly assaulting of a village panchayat waterman. The complaint was filed at the Kunigal police station following a court order demanding the registration of an FIR. The accused are Kunigal Deputy Superintendent of Police Om Prakash, Circle Inspector Madhava Naik, Amrittur Police Station Sub-Inspector Shamanth Gowda, and SHO Dayanand. The incident occurred on 23 23 when waterman Gangadhar was taken to the Kunigal police station for questioning. Without informing his family members, Gangadhar was forcefully detained. It is alleged that he was subjected to physical assault during his time at the police station. After being released later in the evening, Gangadhar sought medical treatment for his injuries and approached the court seeking justice. *—Salar News*

K'taka approves holding of global investors meet

BENGALURU, 13 JUNE

Karnataka Cabinet on Thursday gave its approval for holding 'Invest Karnataka 2025', the Global Investors Meet, from 12-14 February here next year. The Cabinet headed by Chief Minister Siddaramaiah, which met for the first time after the Lok Sabha polls and completion of the Model Code of Conduct, also approved a proposal to procure the services of 'The Boston Consulting Group (India) Private Ltd. ' as the knowledge partner, for attracting investments in Karnataka, Law and Parliamentary Affairs Minister HK Patil said While briefing reporters about the cabinet decisions after the meeting, Patil said, "Already Rs 75 crore was provided for this, and the cabinet today gave its approval to provide additional Rs 15 crore for this." *—PTI*

Poorer students most hit in NEET row

Those who didn't make the cut have to either settle in lower-tier colleges or wait for next year

VAISHNAVI GOPALRAJ
BENGALURU, 13 JUNE

As NEET 2024 results have sparked a row across the country, students from the lower strata of society have largely been affected by it. Out of 15 students across states who spoke to **Salar News**, 13 from economically backward communities said the exam results this time dashed their hopes of studying in premier institutes.

Over 24 lakh candidates appeared for National Eligibility cum Entrance Test (NEET) for admission to undergraduate courses in medical, dental, and AYUSH in government and private colleges. NEET 2024 has been plagued by allegations of inflation of marks and paper leaks.

Medical colleges in the country increased cut-off marks after 67 students achieved a perfect score of 720/720. The students who didn't make the cut have to either settle in lower-tier colleges or take another chance next year. But those from financially weaker sections of society neither can afford another chance at NEET to realise their dream of studying in government colleges nor study in private colleges which charge exorbitant fees.

AIDSO
We demand to heed to the demand of
REVOKING
National Level Entrance Test!
We demand JUDICIAL ENQUIRY into the NEET-UG
NEET-UG Exam Scam
Exemplary Punishment to all Culprits!

Over 24 lakh candidates appeared for National Eligibility cum Entrance Test (NEET) for admission to undergraduate courses in medicine, dentistry, and AYUSH in government and private colleges *PHOTO: X/@PRATHAMJC18*

- As NEET 2024 results have sparked a row across the country, students from the lower strata of society have largely been affected by it. Out of 15 students across states who spoke to Salar News, 13 from economically backward communities said the exam results this time dashed their hopes of studying in premier institutes.

When NEET exam results came out on the day of counting for Lok Sabha elections, 17-year-old Parakar (name changed), from Handi Jogi community (a subgroup among the Scheduled Castes in Mysuru), was devastated. "When I was checking the answers with my uncle after the exam, I had a score of 425 out of 750, which was enough to get into my District Medical College. With the cut-off score increased, my hopes of studying there have been shattered," he told Salar News.

Another student from Gadag, who has attempted NEET three times, scored 500/720 this time. "I still cannot get a seat at the medical college in my district. Now, I have to wait another year to try again, and I have no choice but to help my father with farming," he said.

The fee structure for MBBS in government colleges ranges from Rs 6,000 to 13,000, while in private institutes, it costs nearly Rs 20 to 26 lakh. Rashmi (name changed) from Nanded, Maharashtra, said the authorities cancelled the grace marks for 1,563 students, but nobody knows how this will impact the ranking system.

Rise in suicides

In 2022, over 13,000 NEET students in India died by suicide in Maharashtra (378), Madhya Pradesh (277), and Jharkhand (174) reporting the highest numbers. In 2024, six people died by suicide due to the stress related to the NEET exam.

—Salar News

Another student from Nanded, Yashraj Devrao Kadam, 17, said he scored 600/750 and it was a good score for getting into a medical college. "I didn't get admission and now, I'm trying to get into semi-government colleges."

Coaching centres across the country have received numerous calls from worried parents asking about their children's future. A counsellor from one of the top NEET coaching centres in the City said, "Some parents are staying supportive, encouraging their children to try again, while others are completely shattered due to financial constraints."

An educationist from Bengaluru said admissions this time may be delayed due to the controversy. Karthik Krishan B, Principal of Surana College, Peenya campus, told Salar News, "This year, students from rural villages have been put to a disadvantage by the results."

An official from Karnataka Department of Higher Education and Karnataka Examinations Authority told Salar News, "Once we start counselling, we can determine how many people are affected."

After NEET was introduced replacing State-level exams in the country, unhealthy competition emerged among aspirants. Dr Mahabeleshwar Rao, an educationist from Udupi, said, "We have created an education system where we are installing anti-suicide ceiling fans in hostel rooms, and not having a latch on the door to prevent suicide. Nobody is bothering to correct the education system."

—Salar News

Three more aides of Darshan arrested in Renukaswamy murder case: Police

BENGALURU, 13 JUNE

Three people, including the close aide of Kannada star Darshan Thoogudeepa, were arrested in the murder of Renukaswamy even as the police recovered CCTV footage showing the suspected abduction of the victim in a car.According to police sources, Darshan's aide Nagaraj was looking after all the dealings of the actor.

He was also taking care of Darshan's farmhouse in Mysuru.

Nagaraj was on the run ever since the police arrested Darshan, his friend and actress Pavithra Gowda and 11 other henchmen.

Pradosh had appeared in minor roles in some movies in which Darshan was the lead actor.

Another henchman identified as Ravi surrendered before Deputy Superintendent of Police on Thursday.

So far 16 people have been arrested including Darshan and Pavithra.

Darshan and his gang were arrested in the murder of Renukaswamy from Chitradurga on 8 June for allegedly sending lewd messages to Pavithra.

On 9 June, three accused had approached police and confessed to having murdered Renukaswamy over a financial dispute. As the investigation progressed, police learnt that the trio was trying to mislead the investigation and that Darshan and gang was involved in it.

During inquiry, the police team learnt that Darshan reportedly offered the gang members Rs 30 lakh and agreed to take care of their families till they are out of jail.

The team probing the murder case stumbled upon the CCTV footage showing the suspected abduction of the victim by some associates of Darshan in this district headquarters town of Chitradurga.

The footage extracted on 8 June showed the car zooming past the highway. Police believed that Renukaswamy was inside the car.

They suspect that the 34-year-old pharmacy worker, a fan of Darshan, was "lured" by his abductors.

The Karnataka Film Chamber of Commerce met today amid demand for a ban on Darshan's movies.

They decided that a delegation consisting of former presidents and executive committee members would meet the family members of Renukaswamy on Friday in Chitradurga. *—Salar News*

Sec 144 at police station holding Darshan

BENGALURU, 13 JUNE

City police have imposed prohibitory orders under Section 144 of the Criminal Procedure Code (CrPC) within a 200-meter radius of the Annapoorneshwari Nagar Police Station. This comes amidst intense media scrutiny surrounding the high-profile murder case of Renukswamy, where Kannada actor Darshan and his friend Pavithra Gowda are among those currently in custody.

The police have also reportedly erected a shamiyana, a temporary tent-like structure, to shield the station from media glare. This action has drawn criticism from the Leader of the Opposition, R Ashoka, who questioned the need for such measures. He reportedly compared the situation to conflict zones such as Kashmir, implying a lack of confidence in the State police's ability to handle a regular investigation.

This action has drawn criticism from the Leader of the Opposition, R Ashoka *PHOTO: PTI*

Maenwhile, Karnataka Law Minister HK Patil has dismissed allegations of special privileges being granted to Darshan of. He refuted claims that the police station was covered to facilitate secretive interrogations. *—Salar News*

SHOWERS OF JOY

Pedestrians get drenched during rains, in Bengaluru on Thursday *PHOTO: X/@PRATHAMJC18*

Forest dept to give 500 acres for Yettinahole project: DKS

BENGALURU, 13 JUNE

Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar on Thursday said State Forest Department has agreed to hand over 500 acres, which is crucial for implementing Yettinahole drinking water project.

He said this after a meeting with Revenue Minister Krishna Byre Gowda and Forest Minister Eshwar Khandre at Vikasa Soudha here. "In return, Revenue Department has agreed to hand over an equal area of revenue land to Forest Department. The process will be completed soon," Shivakumar, who is also the Water Resources Minister said. The Yettinahole project is aimed at providing drinking water to parts of Kolar, Chikkaballapur, Tumakuru, Ramanagara and Bengaluru Urban districts by drawing 24 tmcft of water from the Yettinahole river in Sakleshpur taluk of Hassan district.

Noting that officials have identified challenges facing the projects and discussions were held regarding solutions in the meeting, Shivakumar said, "There were bottlenecks at 20 different places over a stretch of 260km pertaining to forest land. We conducted a joint survey involving Forest and Revenue departments and the issue is now resolved. The work will start soon."

A compensation of Rs 51 crore needs to be given to farmers in some places, of which Rs 10 crore has already been released, he said. There are differences between Forest and Revenue departments over the compensation and this will be discussed in the Cabinet meeting. "The balancing reservoir in Doddaballapura taluk is pending and preparations are on to start the work. In the first phase, water will be pumped to a distance of 48 km by next month. A technical committee has been formed to explore using water which is currently flowing into the sea," he added. *—PTI*

State cracks down on nursing colleges lacking facilities

BENGALURU, 13 JUNE

Karnataka Medical Education Minister Sharan Prakash Patil on Thursday asked officials to seal nursing colleges that nursing colleges that fail to provide basic infrastructure facilities to students, despite receiving government support.

During a meeting with nursing college members and medical education department officials at Vikas Soudh, he expressed concerns over numerous complaints regarding insufficient infrastructure in many nursing colleges. Patil instructed Director of Medical Education Sujatha Rathore to inspect and seal those colleges found to be lacking in essential facilities.

He said that the government had been lenient with the managements of private colleges in the hope that they would address their shortcomings.

However, he noted that most of the colleges still lack adequate teaching and non-teaching staff, as well as essential facilities such as libraries, laboratories, and proper hygiene, despite charging substantial fees from students during admissions.

The minister directed officials to conduct pre-admission visits to colleges, ensuring their compliance with government regulations, and to take strict action against those found to be violating norms. Patil also rejected the demand from nursing college managements to increase the fee structure by 20 per cent, highlighting the fees ranging between Rs 10,000 and Rs 1 lakh for students admitted under government quota, Rs 1.4 lakh for non-Karnataka students, and those under the management quota.

To address the issue, the minister suggested that college managements allocate 40 per cent of seats under the government quota. *—Salar News*

COMMUTERS FACE DELAYS

Namma Metro Purple Line hit by technical snag

BENGALURU, 13 JUNE

Commuters on Bengaluru's busy Metro Purple Line were left frustrated on Thursday morning after a technical snag at Trinity Station caused delays in train services. Bangalore Metro Rail Corporation Limited (BMRCL) identified the issue at 9:58 am, leading to temporary disruptions and overcrowding at stations.

Many commuters, like IT employee Ajay Rao, expressed their annoyance at the recurring technical problems. "These snags are becoming too common and disruptive," Rao told **Salar News**. "The BMRCL needs to improve management to ensure smoother operations."

BMRCL officials swiftly isolated the affected train and moved it to a side track at Kempegowda Station for repairs. However, another commuter, Charan Nag Shetty, criticised the lack of timely updates. "They should inform us about these issues as soon as possible so we can make alternative arrangements," Shetty said.

- BMRCL officials swiftly isolated the affected train and moved it to a side track at Kempegowda Station for repairs

Regular train services resumed on the Purple Line by 11.30 am.

While the nature of the technical snag remains undisclosed, BMRCL assured the public they are working to prevent similar disruptions in the future.

This incident adds to a string of setbacks for the Purple Line. Earlier this month, a man jumping onto the tracks at Hosahalli Station caused delays, and a tragic incident in March saw a student lose their life after falling onto the tracks. *—Salar News*

Early metro trains for UPSC exam on Sunday

BENGALURU, 13 JUNE

To ensure a smooth commute for UPSC Civil Service (Preliminary) Exam aspirants, the Bangalore Metro Rail Corporation Limited (BMRCL) will start its services an hour earlier on Sunday.Metro trains will begin at 6:00 am instead of the usual 7am schedule from all terminal stations, including Whitefield (Kadugodi), Challaghatta, Nagasandra, and Silk Institute. This service aims to enable candidates to reach their exam centers conveniently and on time. *—Salar News*

BMRCL launches driverless Metro trial on Yellow line

BENGALURU, 13 JUNE

The Bengaluru Metro Rail Corporation Limited (BMRCL) launched its test trials for its first driverless metro prototype on Thursday.

The trail began at the Namma Metro's 19 kilometre yellow line which connects from RV Road to Bommasandra. According to BMRCL, the trials for its first driverless train will have various tests that are to happen on main lines such as traction break test which is to evaluate the vehicle's traction performance.

Full loaded sand bang test to ensure structural stability of the train, signalling test and oscillation trial to check stability, moving behaviour and speed of the train from research design and standard organisation. The tests were done in the presence of a loco-pilot.

PHOTO: X/@SURIYADHONI247

Initially the launch was planned for last year, which was then postponed to February-March 2024. In another development Bengaluru's first ever double-decker flyover will open alongside the Yellow line of Namma Metro. The vehicles will be allowed only to a portion of the flyover, after a final inspection by authorities on 15 June. *—Salar News*

NIA chargesheet against 7 men for radicalising youth

BENGALURU, 13 JUNE

The National Investigation Agency (NIA) has taken a significant step in dismantling an ISIS terror network with the arrest and chargesheet of seven individuals belonging to the Ballari module. This breakthrough comes amid ongoing concerns about radicalisation and sleeper cell activities.

The NIA investigation, codenamed RC-03/2023/NIA/BLR and initiated in December 2023, revealed that the accused were actively involved in recruiting and radicalising vulnerable youth as Mujahideen's, to establish a network of 50 sleeper cells across every Indian district by 2025. These cells were intended to launch guerrilla attacks targeting security personnel and leaders of specific religious groups. The terror module, inspired by the violent ideology of the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), aimed to establish a Caliphate system in India through jihad. Their activities included fabricating explosives for potential attacks and conducting a trial blast in Bellary. Investigations further exposed their efforts to propagate ISIS ideology by sharing extremist digital content with potential recruits. All of them have been charged under various sections of IPC, UA(P) Act, Arms Act and Explosive Substances Act.

The seized materials included bomb-making materials, weapons, and propaganda materials promoting jihad and the establishment of an Islamic caliphate. Incriminating documents outlining the ISIS roadmap for achieving this goal in India were also recovered.

Six of the accused pledged allegiance (bayath) to Md. Sulaiman, who self-proclaimed himself as the leader (Amir) of the group. The NIA has identified the accused as Mohammed Muniruddin, Syed Sameer, Md. Muzammil (all from Karnataka), Anas Iqbal Shaikh (Maharashtra), Mohd. Shahbaz (Jharkhand), and Shayan Rehman (Delhi). *—Salar News*

PHOTO: PTI

Naidu orders pension hikes, teachers' hiring

AMARAVATI, 13 JUNE

Among the first decisions Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu took when he assumed office on Thursday were to recruit 16,347 government teachers, hike welfare pensions to Rs 4,000 a month and conduct a skills census. Naidu also signed a file revoking the Land Titling Act and another on reviving 'Anna Canteens', which serves cooked meals at subsided prices to the people. The five files were signed immediately after Naidu assumed office at the secretariat amid Vedic chants. The TDP chief was sworn in as the chief minister on Wednesday at Kesarapalle.

Before arriving at the secretariat on Thursday to take charge, he visited two temples, Tirupati and Vijayawada Durga, and offered prayers. —*PTI*

Goa Cong files plaint against BJP leaders over priests jibe

PANAJI, 13 JUNE

Congress in Goa on Thursday filed a complaint with the police against two local BJP leaders, accusing them of inciting hostility towards Catholic priests in the state and demanded action against them.

Congress leader Girish Chodankar filed the complaint against BJP spokesman Giriraj Pai Vernekar and Mormugao MLA Sankalp Amonkar, hours after they addressed a press conference claiming that Catholic priests worked against BJP's official candidate Pallavi Dempo in South Goa, resulting in her defeat in the Lok Sabha elections held on 7 May. In the complaint, filed with Margao police station in South Goa, Chodankar said the statements made by the two BJP leaders incited hostility towards Catholic priests. —*PTI*

Jarange stops fast, gives govt time to accept demands

CHHATRAPATI SAMBHAJINAGAR, 13 JUNE

Maratha quota activist Manoj Jarange on Thursday suspended his indefinite fast over the reservation issue six days after launching it, and set a deadline of one month before the Maharashtra government to accept the community's demands. He made the announcement after Maharashtra minister and member of Maratha quota sub-committee Shambhuraj Desai, Shiv Sena MP Sandipan Bhumre met him at his native Antarwali Sarati village in Jalna district and discussed the issue. Addressing people at the protest site, Jarange said, "We are giving a month's time to the government to fulfil the demands of the Maratha community," he said. —*PTI*

Sikkim CM's wife quits as MLA, day after taking oath

GANGTOK, 13 JUNE

Sikkim Chief Minister Prem Singh Tamang's wife Krishna Kumari Rai on Thursday quit as an MLA, a day after taking oath, according to an official notification. The reason behind her sudden decision is not yet known. She had won from the Namchi-Singhithang seat in the recently concluded assembly polls, defeating Sikkim Democratic Front (SDF) candidate Bimal Rai. Speaker MN Sherpa has accepted Krishna Kumari Rai's resignation, Sikkim Legislative Assembly Secretary Lalit Kumar Gurung said. Neither she nor the ruling Sikkim Krantikari Morcha leadership could be contacted for comments regarding the development. He is currently in Arunachal Pradesh to attend the swearing in ceremony of his counterpart Pema Khandu.—*PTI*

Modi reviews security in J&K after 4 terror attacks

50 people were detained as search expanded to Reasi district

NEW DELHI/ SRINAGAR, 13 JUNE

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday asked officials to deploy the "full spectrum of counter-terror capabilities" as he reviewed the situation in Jammu and Kashmir following a spate of terror incidents, including an attack on a bus carrying pilgrims in Reasi district.

Fifty people have been detained in connection with the attack.

To ensure a comprehensive probe, the search operation to track down the terrorists, has been expanded to cover Reasi district's far-flung Arnas and Mahore areas which were terrorist hotbeds between 1995 and 2005.

On Sunday, terrorists opened fire on a 53-seater bus carrying pilgrims when it was en route to the Mata Vaishno Devi shrine in Katra from the Shiv Khori temple. The bus, ferrying pilgrims from Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan and Delhi, plunged into a deep gorge following the gunfire, killing nine people and injuring 41 others.On Tuesday, terrorists fired at a joint checkpost of the 4 Rashtriya Rifles and police at Chattergalla in Bhaderwah while a search party in the Gandoh area of the district was attacked on Wednesday, resulting in injuries to seven security personnel, including a policeman. Confirming the detention of 50 suspects in connection with the attack, a police spokesperson said it followed an intensive investigation."Significant leads have been uncovered, aiding in the identification and capture of those who may be potentially involved in orchestrating the attack. To ensure a comprehensive probe, search operations have been expanded to cover the far-flung areas of Arnas and Mahore," the spokesperson said.He said these operations aim to uncover further evidence and apprehend terrorists who may be hiding in these remote regions. —*PTI*

Personnel of Special Operations Group of the Jammu and Kashmir Police during a search operation at Narwal in Jammu on Thursday PHOTO: PTI

> **Under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, we aim to further strengthen the security apparatus of the country, with a focus on achieving self-reliance in defence manufacturing**
>
> -Rajnath Singh, Defence Minister

Liquid IED threat back in Kashmir

Liquid explosives seem to have made a comeback in Jammu and Kashmir militancy theatre after 17 years as a recent raid by police in the Union territory led to the recovery of such "difficult-to-detect (d2d)" Improvised Explosive Devices, officials said. The liquid IED was recovered with the assistance of one of the Over Ground Workers (OGW), arrested after a gunfight earlier this month in Pulwama in which one of the oldest surviving LeT terrorists Riyaz Dar alias "Sathar" and his associate Rayees Dar were killed. —*PTI*

BJP may outsource govt someday in UP: Akhilesh

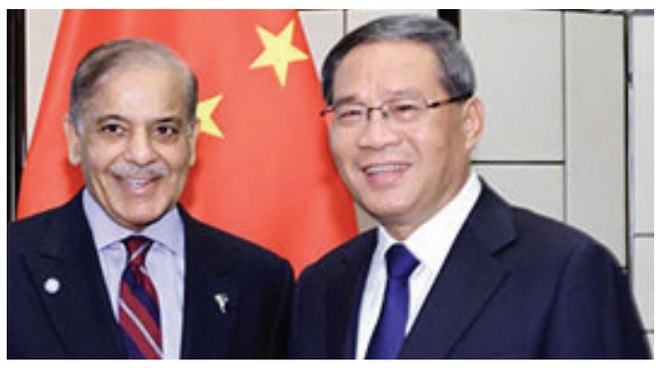
LUCKNOW, 13 JUNE

Samajwadi Party (SP) President Akhilesh Yadav, taking a jibe on a letter of the UP government over the recruitment of clerks in the state police through outsourcing, said on Thursday that BJP might outsource the government someday. The state police later said the letter was issued "erroneously" and that it has been cancelled.

In a comment on X, the Yadav said, "Subsequent to deputing one acting Director General of Police (DGP) after another, now outsourcing of some police services is being considered. If the police is on contract path, then neither it will have any accountability nor confidential and sensitive information will be prevented from going out.""BJP should answer that when the police has its own recruitment board, then why is the government running away from direct permanent appointment?" he said.

Akhilesh Yadav PHOTO: PTI

A letter issued to all senior police officers of the state on 11 June, and carrying the signature of DGP (Establishment) Prabhakar Chaudhary, mentioned that in view of the continuous increase in the work of the department, it was proposed to take the services through outsourcing for the posts of assistant sub-inspector (clerk), assistant sub-inspector (accounts) and sub-inspector (confidential) in addition to the sanctioned posts in the cadre.The letter, which has been doing the rounds on social media platforms, sought the opinion of the officers in this regard. —*PTI*



The joint statement was issued in Beijing on 7 June following talks between Pak PM Shehbaz Sharif and Chinese Premier Li Qiang PHOTO: ANI

India rejects China-Pak's unwarranted J&K remarks

- The CPEC passes through Pakistan-Occupied-Kashmir

NEW DELHI, 13 JUNE

India on Thursday categorically rejected "unwarranted" references to Jammu and Kashmir in a latest joint statement by China and Pakistan and asserted that the Union Territory and Ladakh have been, are and will always remain its integral parts.

The joint statement was issued in Beijing on 7 June following talks between Pakistan Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and Chinese Premier Li Qiang. India also criticised mentioning of projects under the so-called China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) in the joint statement and said New Delhi rejects any moves to reinforce or legitimise Islamabad's illegal occupation of territories.

The CPEC passes through Pakistan-Occupied-Kashmir.

The China-Pakistan joint statement said the Pakistani side briefed the Chinese side on the latest developments in Jammu and Kashmir.

It said the Chinese side reiterated that the "Jammu and Kashmir dispute is left over from history, and should be properly and peacefully resolved in accordance with the UN Charter, relevant UN Security Council resolutions and bilateral agreements".

External Affairs Ministry spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal took strong note of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) that featured in the joint statement. —*PTI*

After losing LS elections, Ajit Pawar's wife Sunetra enters RS poll fray

MUMBAI, 13 JUNE

Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar's wife Sunetra on Thursday filed nomination papers as the NCP candidate for the upcoming Rajya Sabha elections, days after she lost the Lok Sabha polls from Baramati.

Incidentally, barring leaders from the NCP, no politician from the Ajit Pawar-led party's allies in the ruling Mahayuti -- the BJP and the Shiv Sena -- was present when Sunetra Pawar filed her nomination at the Vidhan Bhavan in south Mumbai.

Senior NCP leaders like Rajya Sabha member Praful Patel, Maharashtra cabinet minister Chhagan Bhujbal, party's state unit president and Lok Sabha MP-elect Sunil Tatkare and legislative assembly deputy speaker Narhari Zirwal were present at the filing of the nomination.

Bhujbal said though he was keen on contesting the Rajya Sabha polls, he was not upset with Sunetra Pawar's nomination, which he described as a "collective decision" of the party.In the just-concluded Lok Sabha elections, Sunetra Pawar lost from the Baramati constituency in Pune district, where her sister-in-law Supriya Sule, the daughter of NCP (SP) president Sharad Pawar, registered her fourth consecutive win.

"The NCP has decided to field Sunetra Pawar for the Rajya Sabha elections. Even I was keen on contesting the elections, but during a meeting on Wednesday evening, party leaders finalised her name," said Bhujbal. —*PTI*

Sunetra PHOTO: PTI

ED makes fresh arrest in money laundering case against Hemant Soren

RANCHI, 13 JUNE

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) has arrested an alleged broker on Wednesday in connection with a land grab-linked money laundering case against former Jharkhand chief minister Hemant Soren and some others, official sources said.

According to them, Shekhar Prasad Mahto, 39, alias Sehkhar Kushwaha is alleged to have "connived" with the prime accused in this case and former revenue department sub-inspector Bhanu Pratap Prasad in preparing a "fake" deed and "tampering" government records to "acquire" a 4.83-acre land. The agency alleged that the man was "knowingly involved in the processes and activities connected with proceeds of crime (in the form of land and money) which are derived from illegal activities i.e. preparation of fake deeds, committing forgery, falsification and tampering with government records".

The ED produced Mahto before a special PMLA court here and said that the accused's custody was required "to ascertain the proceeds of crime used and generated out of the said activities and to find the trail of proceeds of crime involved in the present case".Land parcels worth Rs 266 crore, including a clutch of plots spread across 8.86 acres acquired "illegally" by Soren, have been attached by the agency till now. —*PTI*

Sunetra PHOTO: PTI

PEMA SWEARS IN AS AP CM FOR 3RD STRAIGHT TERM

ITANAGAR, 13 JUNE

BJP leader Pema Khandu took oath as the Chief Minister of Arunachal Pradesh for the third consecutive term on Thursday.

Khandu, who was re-elected unopposed from the Mukto constituency in the border district of Tawang, was sworn in by Governor KT Parnaik in the presence of Union Home Minister Amit Shah, BJP President JP Nadda, Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma and Sikkim Chief Minister Prem Singh Tamang, among others.Eleven other MLAs were also sworn in as ministers at the function held in the Dorjee Khandu State Convention Centre. Among them were Deputy CM Chowna Mein, former assembly speaker PD Sona, BJP state president Biyuram Wahge, and Dasanglu Pul, the widow of former CM Kalikho Pul.While Dasanglu Pul is the lone woman minister, the new cabinet has eight fresh faces. —*PTI*

MODI LEAVES FOR ITALY

AI, energy, Africa India's focus in G7 summit

NEW DELHI, 13 JUNE

As he embarks on a visit to Italy to attend an outreach session at the G7 summit, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday said its focus would be on artificial intelligence, energy, Africa, and the Mediterranean.

Modi said this in a departure statement before leaving for the European nation in his first foreign trip after becoming Prime Minister for a third term.

Modi said issues crucial for the Global South will also be deliberated upon at the Outreach session.

"At the invitation of Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni, I am travelling to Apulia region in Italy to participate in the G7 Outreach summit on 14 June," Modi said.

The Prime Minister said he was glad that his first visit in the third consecutive term is to Italy for the G-7 Summit.

"It will be an opportunity to bring greater synergy between the outcomes of the G20 Summit held under India's Presidency and the forthcoming G7 Summit, and deliberate on issues which are crucial for the Global South," he said.

Narendra Modi PHOTO: X

Modi will have a bilateral meeting with Meloni. "We remain committed to consolidating the India-Italy strategic partnership, and bolstering cooperation in the Indo-Pacific and the Mediterranean regions," he said.

The Prime Minister is likely to hold a number of bilateral meetings on the sidelines of the summit. "I am also looking forward to meeting other leaders participating in the Summit," he said.

Italy is holding the current presidency of the G7 (Group of Seven) and is hosting the summit in that capacity. A key focus of the Italian presidency has been to defend the rules-based international system.

The G7 expected to give equal importance to the conflict in the Middle East, with its consequences for the global agenda, it says. —*PTI*

'REMOVE NTA'

NSUI members stage a protest demanding re-examination of NEET-UG Entrance Exam 2024 in New Delhi on Thursday PHOTO: PTI

Oppn demands SC-monitored probe into NEET

NEW DELHI, 13 JUNE

The Opposition on Thursday reiterated its demand of a Supreme Court-monitored probe into the National Eligibility-cum-Entrance Test (NEET) exam issue, and asserted that the anger in the country over the matter will "reverberate inside Parliament as well".

Congress demanded the removal of the National Testing Agency (NTA) Director General and claimed that BJP's attitude towards the ongoing demand for an inquiry into the NEET examination is "irresponsible and insensitive".

Protests were also held near the West Bengal Education Department's headquarters in Salt Lake, alleging irregularities in the exam and delay in the commencement of admissions in state-run colleges. Expressing solidarity with the students over the issue of NEET-UG, TMC also demanded a Supreme Court-monitored probe

The Tamil Nadu government also slammed the Centre over the alleged irregularities in exam and said awarding grace marks was 'unacceptable' as it amounted to fraud. The growing resentment and protest across the country to holding the NEET only strengthened the DMK's repeated plea to abolish the screening test, State Health Minister Ma Subramanian said. The Chief Minister MK Stalin said Centre agreeing to cancel grace marks awarded in NEET 2024 is another admission of its own 'ineptitude' and batted for restoration of the role of state governments in deciding the method of selection for MBBS.

"We demand the investigation because it has affected around 24 lakh students," Congress leader Gaurav Gogoi said. "We believe that no inquiry can be a just, fair and comprehensive if it is headed by the NTA itself. The NTA chairperson should be removed and Prime minister Narendra Modi, who likes giving exam advice to Class 10 students, should not forget the mental anxiety caused to these undergraduates," he said. Instead of paying attention to the "NEET scam", Modi is busy attending oath-taking ceremonies and going abroad on foreign trips, he said.

Gogoi credited Rahul Gandhi for taking up the issue of the NEET exam soon after the Lok Sabha results were declared. The Congress leader also hit out at Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan for rejecting allegations of paper leak in medical entrance exam NEET-UG. —*PTI*

Cops block Suvendu from entering Raj Bhavan

KOLKATA, 13 JUNE

The police on Thursday prevented BJP leader Suvendu Adhikari from entering Raj Bhavan to meet West Bengal Governor CV Ananda Bose with alleged victims of post-poll violence on Thursday, citing Section 144 of CrPC which is in force outside the Governor House, which prohibits large gatherings.

Adhikari, the Leader of the Opposition in the state Assembly, told reporters outside the Raj Bhavan that he would move Calcutta High Court against the Kolkata Police's "arbitrary" decision to stop him.He was scheduled to meet the Governor along with alleged victims of post-poll violence in the state to demand justice so that they can return home.

But as Adhikari was about to enter the Raj Bhavan premises, his car was stopped along with other vehicles carrying the victims of the post-poll violence citing Sec 144.

"I have waited for more than one hour but the police are not allowing us inside. The Governor gave me an appointment and the police had the audacity to violate his instructions. I also communicated with the Governor's office. As the police have stopped me from entering the Raj Bhavan premises, ," he said. —*PTI*

PHOTO: PIXABAY

Activist on hunger strike since Feb dies in UP

MATHURA, 13 JUNE

A social worker on hunger strike for the last four months to protest against alleged corruption in rural development works here has died in the district hospital, officials said on Thursday. Sub-Divisional Magistrate of Mant, Adesh Kumar, said 66-year-old Devki Nand Sharma had earlier lodged complaints with the rural development department alleging corruption in the construction of toilets and MGNREGA works in the district. Sharma was part of an inquiry team that probed the complaints of corruption but he disagreed with the report and sat on a protest fast outside a temple near his residence since February 12, Kumar said. His family informed officials about his failing health following.He died at the district hospital.—*PTI*

Mumbai man finds flesh with nail in ice cream

MUMBAI, 13 JUNE

A man from Malad area in Mumbai has complained that he found a piece of flesh with a nail in an ice cream cone that he ordered online, police said on Thursday. Although it is suspected to be a piece of human finger, it has been sent for an examination, they said. The incident occurred on Wednesday afternoon, the police said. "The complainant in the case, a 26-year-old doctor with MBBS degree who stays in Malad west, had ordered a butterscotch ice-cream cone of Yummo company. While consuming the ice-cream after lunch, he came across a half an inch long piece of flesh with a nail in the ice cream," he said. The man put the piece of flesh in an ice bag and approached the Malad police station, the official said.—*PTI*

3 held in Noida with 800kg drugs from Odisha

NOIDA, 13 JUNE

Noida Police on Thursday said they have seized 800kgs of cannabis, valued at approximately Rs 4 crore in the black market, and arrested three people transporting it. The cannabis was concealed in the truck along with 2,000 litres of pesticide which they were bringing from Odisha, they said. The truck was intercepted at Sector 62 roundabout by Noida Police's Crime Response Team (CRT) along with officials of the local Sector 58 police station late Wednesday night. "Three accused have been arrested by the CRT and Sector 58 team and about eight quintal ganja (worth Rs 4 crore) and pesticide (worth Rs 60 lakh) have been recovered from them. —*PTI*

J&K Edu Dept mandates national anthem in schools

SRINAGAR, 13 JUNE

The School Education Department of Jammu and Kashmir has directed all schools in the Union Territory to start the morning assembly with the national anthem.The Principal Secretary to the Government, School Education Department, through a circular directed all schools to make the morning assembly uniform across the Union Territory. "Morning assembly should begin with the National Anthem as per standard protocol," the circular, issued on Wednesday, read. The department said the morning assemblies have proved to be an invaluable ritual in instilling a sense of unity and discipline among the students."They (assemblies) serve as platforms to nurture the values of moral integrity, shared community tranquility. —*PTI*

24 Keralites, 5 Tamils killed in Kuwait building fire

Kuwait holds DNA identification tests as kin await confirmation

T'PURAM, 13 JUNE

The Kerala government on Thursday said it will provide Rs 5 lakh financial assistance to the families of the people who died from state PHOTO: PTI

The number of people from Kerala who died in the Kuwait fire tragedy has risen to 24, while seven seriously injured people from the Southern state are being treated in various hospitals in the Gulf country, according to a senior official of NORKA Roots on Thursday.

The Department of Non-Resident Keralites' Affairs (NORKA) was constituted by the state government in 1996 to address the grievances of non-resident Keralites both in India and abroad and to establish a sustainable partnership with them.

The Kerala government on Thursday said it will provide Rs 5 lakh financial assistance to the families of the people from the state who died in the Kuwait fire tragedy that claimed 49 lives and left 50 others injured.

Tamil Nadu Minister for Minorities Welfare and Non-Resident Tamils Welfare, KS Masthan on Thursday said that five people from the state have died in the Kuwait fire incident.

Masthan quoted the information from the Tamil associations based abroad and said that it would take time to identify the deceased.

Kuwaiti authorities are conducting DNA tests on the bodies of those killed in the devastating fire incident in southern Kuwait's Mangaf area and an IAF aircraft is on standby to bring back the mortal remains of Indians killed in the incident, officials said on Thursday.

India's mission in Kuwait is ascertaining the full details from the concerned Kuwaiti authorities on the fire incident which killed 49 foreign workers, including around 40 Indians, and injured 50 others, even as officials here started an investigation into one of the worst fires in the Gulf nation

Ajith Kolasseri, who is holding additional charge of the NORKA Chief Executive Officer, said according to the information provided by its help desk in Kuwait unofficially, the number of casualties among Keralites is rising.

Earlier, the state government had said that as per the information received by it, 19 people from Kerala died in the incident.

Pradeep, father of 27-year-old Srihari who lived in the building that caught fire in Kuwait on Wednesday which resulted in 49 deaths, was able to identify the mortal remains of his son only from the tattoo on his hand.Pradeep said he was called by the authorities to identify his son's body kept in a hospital mortuary.

"When I went there, I saw that the face was completely swollen and the nose was covered with soot. I was unable to identify him. I just could not.

"Then I told them that he has a tattoo on his hand. Based on that he was identified," Pradeep, sobbing, told a Malayalam news channel in Kuwait on Thursday.

Srihari had just returned to Kuwait from Kerala last week on 5 June. —*PTI/ANI*

AFTER 1.4L VISAS ISSUED

US Mission in India recieves record number of visa demands

NEW DELHI, 13 JUNE

A record 1,40,000 student visas were issued last year PHOTO: PTI

After issuing a record 1,40,000 student visas last year, the US consular team in India is all geared up to meet the expected rise in number of applications from Indian students in 2024, with a senior official at the embassy here saying that the projected total number this year will be "similar or in excess" in comparison to last year.

The US Mission in India on Thursday held its eighth annual Student Visa Day countrywide with consular officers from New Delhi, Chennai, Hyderabad, Kolkata, and Mumbai interviewing Indian student visa applicants.At the US Embassy in Delhi, a long queue of students was seen since morning.

American universities attract a large number of Indian students, and last year, the US consular team in India issued over 1,40,000 student visas -- higher than for any other country setting a record for the third year in a row.

Syed Mujtaba Andrabi, acting Consul General at US Embassy in New Delhi, in an interaction with PTI at the embassy, said, "by the end of the day, we should have interviewed approximately 4,000 students.""It (student visas) is one of our top priorities. Academic exchange between the two countries is one of the top priorities of this administration, and our Mission here. Last year, we issued a record number of student visas, numbering 1,40,000, which has been a record... And, we will continue to focus on this area, as we go forward during this year," Andrabi told PTI."We will continue to have the same focus, and maximise the number of students," he added. Asked about the extent of the expected rise in student visas in 2024, he said, "It will be similar or in excess" to last year.America gives "high priority" to student visas because it knows people-to-people ties "last a lifetime," US envoy Eric Garcetti had told PTI. —*PTI*

HC GRANTS 1 MONTH FOR VACATING MOSQUE IN DELHI

NEW DELHI, 13 JUNE

The Delhi High Court has directed the DDA and a local religious body to grant one month's time to the caretaker of a mosque and madarsa to vacate the Hazrat Nizamuddin-based masjid premises which has been decided to be demolished by the authorities.

A vacation bench of Justice Amit Sharma, in an order passed on Wednesday, made it clear that no further extension of time shall be granted to petitioner Faizyab Masjid and Madarsa or any other person claiming through it to vacate the premises.The mosque and madarsa are situated near the ISBT bus depot at Sarai Kale Khan in Hazrat Nizamuddin. The High Court was hearing a plea seeking to declare the action of officials of the Delhi Police and Delhi Development Authority (DDA) of threatening demolition of the masjid on 13 June to be illegal, arbitrary and unconstitutional.

The Delhi Religious Committee, represented by advocate Arun Panwar, has decided to remove unauthorised religious structures from public land. —*PTI*

HIMACHAL TAKES U-TURN

Pople wait for tanker water's arrival to collect drinking water amid the ongoing crisis at Vivekanand camp in Delhi on Thursday PHOTO: PTI

We don't have surplus water for Delhi: HP tells SC

NEW DELHI, 13 JUNE

As parts of Delhi grappled with acute water shortage, the Supreme Court on Thursday directed the city government to approach the Upper Yamuna River Board (UYRB) for additional supply after Himachal Pradesh took a sharp U-turn and said it does not have surplus water to spare.

A vacation bench of Justices Prashant Kumar Mishra and Prasanna B Varale asked the Delhi government to submit an application to UYRB by 5pm seeking water for the national capital on humanitarian grounds.

The national capital was in for a huge disappointment when the Himachal Pradesh government told the court it does not have surplus 136 cusecs of water, recanting an earlier statement.

The bench said Yamuna water sharing between states is a complex and sensitive issue and the court does not have the technical expertise to decide on it even on an interim basis.

"The issue should be left to be considered by the body constituted with the agreement of parties in the memorandum of understanding dated 1994.

"Since UYRB has already directed Delhi to submit an application for the supply of additional 150 cusecs of water on humanitarian grounds, such an application be made, if not already made, today by 5pm, and thereafter the board shall convene a meeting tomorrow and take decision in the matter at the earliest. If need be, the board can convene on a day to day basis," the bench said while disposing of the plea filed by the Delhi government.

Police here on Thursday began patrolling the Munak canal area to check the activities of tanker mafia and Delhi minister Atishi inspected a pipeline network supplying water to South Delhi residents as the water crisis in the city worsened.

—*PTI*

6 killed, 3 hurt in blast at Nagpur explosives factory

Workers at the site after a blast at an explosive-manufacturing factory, near Nagpur, on Thursday PHOTO: PTI

NAGPUR, 13 JUNE

Six workers including five women were killed and three injured in a blast at an explosives manufacturing factory near Nagpur city on Thursday afternoon, police said.

The incident took place around 1pm at Chamundi Explosive Pvt Ltd at Dhamna village under Hingna police station limits, around 25km from here. A total of nine injured people were brought to two private hospitals in the city, said Nagpur police commissioner Ravindra Singhal.

Of them, five women and a man died during treatment, he told mediapersons.Most of the victims were working in the factory's packaging unit when the explosion took place, another police official said.

Further probe was on, he added.Union minister and Nagpur MP Nitin Gadkari took to X to express condolences for the deceased.

The BJP leader also appealed local party workers to cancel a program organised here in the evening to welcome him to the city after he again took oath as Union road transport minister following the Lok Sabha elections, his office said in a statement.NCP (SP) MLA from Katol and former Maharashtra home minister Anil Deshmukh visited the blast site. .The owner and manager of the factory were missing and no ambulances were available after the explosion took place, he claimed,

—*PTI*

5 dead as fire engulfs residential building in Ghaziabad

GHAZIABAD, 13 JUNE

- Information was received about the fire in the building in Behta Hajipur under the Loni Border police station area on the intervening night of Wednesday and Thursday. It is suspected that a short circuit caused the fire

PHOTO: ANI

As many as five people were killed and two injured when a fire broke out in a residential building here, police said on Thursday.

It is suspected that a short circuit caused the fire.

Information was received about the fire in the building in Behta Hajipur under the Loni Border police station area on the intervening night of Wednesday and Thursday.

Police personnel and firefighters rushed to the spot and rescued a woman and a child from the building, Additional Commissioner of Police (ACP) Ankur Vihar Bhaskar Verma told PTI.

According to preliminary investigation, a short circuit led to the fire, police said.

Additional Police Commissioner, Ghaziabad Dinesh Kumar P said the fire started on the ground floor of the building and quickly spread to the first and second floors, trapping the residents.

The fire spread due to foam kept in the house. Five bodies were recovered from the building, he said.

Police said the deceased have been identified as Saiful Rehman, 35, his wife Nazira, 32, daughter Isra,7, Faiz,7-month-old and Farheen alias Parveen,25.

The injured, Arsh,10, and Uzma,25, were admitted to GTB Hospital in Delhi. Arsh was later discharged, they said. —*PTI*

Netizens call for ban on Aamir's son's debut movie

NEW DELHI, 13 JUNE

PHOTO: PTI

Hashtags like 'Boycott Netflix' and 'Ban Maharaj Film' trended on social media on Thursday with a section of users calling for a ban on "Maharaj", claiming the upcoming period drama hurts religious sentiments.

The film, which premieres on Netflix on Friday, marks the debut of Bollywood star Aamir Khan's son Junaid Khan. Hashtag "AamirKhan" was also trending on X.

According to the makers, "Maharaj" is set in pre-independent India and is based on the Maharaj Libel Case of 1862, which was ignited by "allegations of misconduct by a prominent figure".Directed by Siddharth P Malhotra and produced by Aditya Chopra under YRF Entertainment, the movie also stars Jaideep Ahlawat.

In an unusual move, the movie is releasing on the streamer without any promotions. No teaser or trailers have been put out by the makers for the film, barring a poster featuring Jaideep and Junaid.

They are standing side by side with Ahlawat's character sporting a 'tilak' on his forehead while Junaid's character, reportedly a journalist, is dressed in a waistcoat.

VHP leader Sadhvi Prachi was one of the many X users who called for a ban on "Maharaj"."Won't tolerate the disrespect of Sanatan Dharma (Sanatan Dharma ka apmaan sehen nahin karenge). Ban Maharaj Film. #BoycottNetflix," Prachi wrote on the microblogging site. —*PTI*

AHEAD OF EID-UL-ADHA

Don't share slaughter pics: Muslim body

NEW DELHI, 13 JUNE

Muslim organisation Jamiat Ulema-e-Hind on Thursday urged Muslims to strictly follow government guidelines PHOTO: PIXABAY

- Muslims across the globe sacrifice animals as a symbol of the willingness and obedience to God that Prophet Ibraham showed in offering his son Ismael as a sacrifice

Prominent Muslim organisation Jamiat Ulema-e-Hind on Thursday urged Muslims to strictly follow government guidelines while offering sacrifice on Eid-ul-Azha and not share pictures of slaughtered animals on social media.

Eid ul-Azha, also called the festival of sacrifice, will be celebrated on Monday.

In his message to Muslims on Eid-ul-Azha, Jamiat president Maulana Arshad Madani said there is no substitute for sacrifice in Islam and it is a religious duty which is obligatory on every Muslim for whom it is prescribed.

"It is important that Muslims take precautionary measures while offering sacrifice. Avoid advertising, especially sharing pictures of slaughtered animals on social media," Madani said.

He also urged Muslims to strictly follow government guidelines while performing 'Qurbani' and avoid sacrificing prohibited animals.

"If mischievous elements, at any place, prevent the sacrifice of a buffalo also, some sensible and influential people should take the administration into confidence and then sacrifice should be offered," he said.

"If, however, there is no way to fulfil this religious obligation, then a sacrifice should be offered in a nearby place where there is no difficulty," Madani said.

He also advised Muslims to take special care of cleanliness on the occasion of Eid-ul-Azha and said animal waste should not be thrown on roads and in drains but should be buried in a way that it does not cause a stench.

"Every possible effort should be made so that no one gets hurt by our action, and complaint on the matter should be filed at local police stations with patience in the face of any kind of provocation by sectarian elements," Madani said.

Muslims across the globe sacrifice animals as permitted by law in their respective countries as a symbol of the willingness and obedience to God that Prophet Ibraham showed in offering his son Ismael as a sacrifice. —*PTI*

EID AL-ADHA

People sell sheep and goats ahead of Eid al-Adha holiday at a livestock market in Jonggol, West Java, in Indonesia on Thursday. People in the world's most populous Muslim country will celebrate Eid al-Adha or the Feast of the Sacrifice on 17 June by slaughtering sheep, goats and cows whose meat later be distributed to the poor
PHOTO: PTI

Paper leaks, grace marks: The NEET-UG controversy

Medical entrance exam NEET-UG with over 24 lakh candidates appearing for it has become a centre of controversy over allegations of several irregularities and has triggered protests across the country and a political slugfest. Here is an explainer on what has happened so far:

Students have been alleging the marks have been randomly reduced or increased for several candidates, affecting their ranks
PHOTO: PTI

● Alleged Irregularities

There have been allegations of inflation of marks in NEET-UG which has led to a record 67 candidates sharing top rank with perfect score. Last year, two students shared the top rank.

Students have been alleging the marks have been randomly reduced or increased for several candidates, affecting their ranks. The grace marks awarded to over 1,500 students to compensate for loss of time for delay in exams at six centres is also under scanner.

There have been allegations of paper leak too. The Economic Offences Unit of Bihar Police had last month said that its investigation has revealed that the question papers and answers for NEET-UG were provided to approximately 35 aspirants before the May 5 exam. Thirteen individuals have been arrested so far in connection with the case.

● Why were students awarded grace marks

Students from at least six centres in Meghalaya, Haryana, Chhattisgarh, Surat and Chandigarh had complained about the loss of time during the exams. At these locations, the students did not get the full 3 hours and 20 minutes to write the exam due to administrative reasons, including the distribution of the wrong question paper, torn OMR sheets, or delay in the distribution of OMR sheets.

A committee formed by the NTA investigated the matter and came up with the formula devised and adopted by the apex court in a 2018 judgement, to address the loss of time faced by candidates. The loss of time was ascertained and such candidates were compensated with grace marks.

● NTA's stand on allegations

The National Testing Agency (NTA) has been maintaining that the sanctity of the exam has not been compromised. The rise in the number of top scorers has been attributed to increase in the competitiveness of the exam and increase in performance standards.

Grace marks have been awarded to 1,563 candidates to compensate for the loss of time in line with the Supreme Court approved formula. Out of the 67 candidates who got 720 out of 720 marks, 44 are on account of the revision in one Answer Key of Physics, and six are on account of compensatory marks for loss of time.

● Education Ministry's stand

The Ministry has set up a four-member expert panel headed by former UPSC chairman to review the grace marks awarded to students. Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan has denied the allegations saying there is no evidence of paper leak and claims of corruption in NTA are unfounded.

● Political slugfest

Congress has been demanding a Supreme Court-monitored probe into the NEET Exam, asserting the anger in the country over the matter will "reverberate inside Parliament as well."

Shiv Sena leader Priyanka Chaturvedi accused the Education Minister of defending NTA, claiming that the Bihar Police investigation has found a paper leak.

The Maharashtra government has sought immediate cancellation of the exam, alleging that its results have caused injustice to the students from the state.

Tamil Nadu Chief Minister MK Stalin said the trends from the latest NEET results have once again vindicated the DMK on its stand opposing the exam and reiterated that the entrance test goes against social justice and federalism.

The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) has also been demanding a Supreme Court- monitored SIT probe.

● Supreme Court's stand

The apex court has noted that the sanctity of NEET-UG, 2024, was affected and has refused to stay the counselling process for admissions. The NTA expert panel has told the court that the decision to give grace marks to 1,563 NEET-UG candidates for admission to MBBS, BDS and others courses had been cancelled and they would be given an option to take a retest on June 23. If the candidates do not wish to take up the retest then their earlier marks, minus the grace marks, will be given for the purposes of the results.

The results of the retest will be declared on 30 June and the counselling for admission in the MBBS, BDS, and other courses will start on 6 July.

—PTI

LETTERS write to us at salar@salar.news

SALAR سالار

AI is biased in job recruitment, says study

The artificial intelligence (AI) revolution has begun, spreading to almost every facet of people's professional and personal lives – including job recruitment.

While artists fear copyright breaches or simply being replaced, business and management are becoming increasingly aware to the possibilities of greater efficiencies in areas as diverse as supply chain management, customer service, product development and human resources (HR) management.

Soon all business areas and operations will be under pressure to adopt AI in some form or another. But the very nature of AI – and the data behind its processes and outputs – mean human biases are being embedded in the technology.

AI in recruitment promises greater objectivity and efficiency during the hiring process by eliminating human biases and enhancing fairness and consistency in decision making.

Magnifying human bias

Although one of the reasons for using AI in recruitment is that it is meant to be to be more objective and consistent, multiple studies have found the technology is, in fact, very likely to be biased. This happens because AI learns from the datasets used to train it. If the data is flawed, the AI will be too.

Biases in data can be made worse by the human-created algorithms supporting AI, which often contain human biases in their design.

In interviews with 22 HR professionals, we identified two common biases in hiring: "stereotype bias" and "similar-to-me bias".

Stereotype bias occurs when decisions are influenced by stereotypes about certain groups, such as preferring candidates of the same gender, leading to gender inequality.

"Similar-to-me" bias happens when recruiters favour candidates who share similar backgrounds or interests to them.

These biases, which can significantly affect the fairness of the hiring process, are embedded in the historical hiring data which are then used to train the AI systems. This leads to biased AI.

So, if past hiring practices favoured certain demographics, the AI will continue to do so. Mitigating these biases is challenging because algorithms can infer personal information based on hidden data from other correlated information.

For example, in countries with different lengths of military service for men and women, an AI might deduce gender based on service duration.

This persistence of bias underscores the need for careful planning and monitoring to ensure fairness in both human and AI-driven recruitment processes.

Can humans help?

As well as HR professionals, we also interviewed 17 AI developers. We wanted to investigate how an AI recruitment system could be developed that would mitigate rather than exacerbate hiring bias.

Based on the interviews, we developed a model wherein HR professionals and AI programmers would go back and forth in exchanging information and questioning preconceptions as they examined data sets and developed algorithms.

However, our findings reveal the difficulty in implementing such a model lies in the educational, professional and demographic differences that exist between HR professionals and AI developers.

These differences impede effective communication, cooperation and even the ability to understand each other. While HR professionals are traditionally trained in people management and organisational behaviour, AI developers are skilled in data science and technology.

Connecting HR and AI

If companies and the HR profession want to address the issue of bias in AI-based recruitment, several changes need to be made.

Firstly, the implementation of a structured training programme for HR professionals focused on information system development and AI is crucial. This training should cover the fundamentals of AI, the identification of biases in AI systems, and strategies for mitigating these biases.

Additionally, fostering better collaboration between HR professionals and AI developers is also important. Companies should be looking to create teams that include both HR and AI specialists. These can help bridge the communication gap and better align their efforts.

Moreover, developing culturally relevant datasets is vital for reducing biases in AI systems. HR professionals and AI developers need to work together to ensure the data used in AI-driven recruitment processes are diverse and representative of different demographic groups. This will help create more equitable hiring practices. Lastly, countries need guidelines and ethical standards for the use of AI in recruitment that can help build trust and ensure fairness.

By taking these steps, we can create a more inclusive and fair recruitment system that leverages the strengths of both HR professionals and AI developers.

Courtesy, The Conversation

AI in recruitment promises greater objectivity and efficiency during the hiring process by eliminating human biases and enhancing fairness and consistency in decision making
PHOTO: UNSPLASH

What can Ukraine peace summit achieve with Russia's absence?

The "Summit on Peace in Ukraine", hosted by Switzerland this weekend, is not a peace conference in the usual sense. Russia, which has dismissed it as irrelevant, won't participate. And any summit aimed at ending the war can't produce a final settlement without Russia's involvement.

Rather, the summit stems from a push by Ukraine to build wider support for "a path towards a just and lasting peace in Ukraine". Specifically, it wants to build consensus around some basic principles for a future settlement.

President Volodymyr Zelensky's ten-point "peace formula", first set out in November 2022, advocates some unobjectionable ideas. It also highlights the damage Russia's invasion has inflicted on Ukraine, along with the dangers Russia poses to other countries.

The plan includes: nuclear safety (underlining the risks posed by Russia's occupation of the Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant, as well as Russian nuclear sabre-rattling)

-food security (addressing the disruption of global food supplies caused by the invasion and the need for freedom of navigation from Ukraine's Black Sea ports)

-energy security (highlighting Russia's attacks crippling Ukraine's energy infrastructure)

-the release of all Ukrainian prisoners and return of Ukrainian children deported to Russia (the subject of arrest warrants by the International Criminal Court against President Vladimir Putin)

-the restoration of Ukrainian territory to its pre-2014, internationally recognised borders

-the full withdrawal of Russian military forces

-justice under international law, including a special tribunal to prosecute alleged war crimes and compensation for damage caused to Ukraine

-addressing environmental destruction caused by the war

-security guarantees for Ukraine against future Russian aggression

-a multilateral peace conference with a binding treaty to end the war.

Who is attending?

Host Switzerland says around 90 countries have agreed to attend out of 160 invited. Many European leaders will be there; the United States will be represented by Vice President Kamala Harris.

The summit is timed to follow immediately after this week's G7 meeting in Italy. Ukraine hopes the G7 will build on its previous support for the war effort, particularly through action on reparations. This includes using frozen Russian assets for Ukraine's reconstruction and defence.

Ukraine hopes the G7 will build on its previous support for the war effort, particularly through action on reparations
PHOTO: PTI

However, Ukraine's main target audience at the summit will be countries of the "Global South". It remains unclear how many of the bigger players, such as Brazil, India, Indonesia, Turkey and South Africa, will be represented – or if they will send officials rather than leaders or ministers.

There are indications that Saudi Arabia and Pakistan, among others, won't be there.

China, which has become more closely aligned to Russia since the war started, has also said it won't take part, given Moscow's absence.

What issues are most important on the agenda?

The Ukrainian government says it will prioritise nuclear safety, food security and the return of prisoners and child deportees at the summit. These likely offer the best prospects for consensus. The government feels it may need to move onto the other points gradually.

The Swiss have also downplayed expectations of major progress. They have suggested a second follow-up conference may be needed, in which Russia could be included.

Another major objective will be to reinforce support for the idea that any settlement must entail restoring Ukraine's recognised borders, which Russia previously agreed to in a 2004 treaty. In addition, at least 141 countries voted in three UN General Assembly resolutions in 2022 and 2023 to condemn Russia's invasion and demand that it withdraw from Ukraine. Just a handful of nations voted with Russia against the resolutions.

Ukraine pursued the summit partly as a counter to proposals floated by some countries or individuals that imply Ukraine may have to lose territory permanently in any ceasefire agreement. This could include Crimea and the eastern Donbas region.

For Ukraine, however, this is more than just territory. Before the war, several million Ukrainians lived in these regions. Many have since fled, but those who remain are being subjected to a brutal occupation regime. For the Crimean Tatars, that is their only homeland.

Despite many countries backing Ukraine's position in the UN, most of the Global South has been reluctant to apply diplomatic or trade sanctions against Russia. Some oppose the idea of unilateral sanctions (that is, not endorsed by the UN).

Russia itself has been very active diplomatically in the Global South and is giving several countries military support, notably in Africa. As a result, many non-Western countries have hedged their bets. They do not want to get caught up in what they see as a fight between the West and Russia, backed by China.

Russia says a full withdrawal of its troops is a non-starter for negotiations. And without Russian participation in the summit – and with questions over buy-in from the Global South – expectations are modest for major practical outcomes. Some reports say a draft statement may not even cover questions of territorial integrity.

Nevertheless, it will be a chance to put Ukraine's plight back in the spotlight after months of focus on Gaza. It will also be a valuable step if the summit can strengthen global opposition to Russia's territorial conquest.

As historian Yuval Noah Hariri puts it, non-Western powers should act to protect the international order – not out of obligation to the West, but for their own benefit, to prevent a new age of imperialism.

Courtesy, The Conversation

PHOTO: GNNHD.TV

Court acquits Imran, Qureshi in Azadi March case

ISLAMABAD, 13 JUNE

A session court in Islamabad on Thursday acquitted Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) founder Imran Khan and senior party leader Shah Mehmood Qureshi in the Azadi March case, Pakistan-based ARY News reported. According to details, the judicial magistrate Malik Muhammad Imran announced the reserved verdict and Imran Khan, Shah Mehmood Qureshi and Awami Muslim League (AML) chief Sheikh Rasheed. The court also ordered the acquittal of Sadaqat Abbasi and Ali Nawaz Awan from the Azadi March case. Several PTI leaders, including Pakistan's former prime minister Imran Khan, Shah Mahmood Qureshi and others were booked by police in various FIRs related to Azadi March, ARY News reported. *—ANI*

Taiwan reports Chinese military activity

TAIPEI, 13 JUNE

Taiwan's Ministry of National Defence (MND) has said that it has tracked 23 Chinese military aircraft and seven naval vessels operating around the island country from 6 am (local time) on Wednesday to 6 am (local time) on Thursday. Of the 23 Chinese military aircraft, 19 crossed the median line of the Taiwan Strait and entered Taiwan's southwest and eastern Air Defense Identification Zone (ADIZ). In response to China's action, Taiwanese armed forces sent aircraft and naval ships and deployed coast-al-based missile systems to monitor China's activity. In a post on X, Taiwan's MND stated, "23 PLA aircraft and 7 PLAN vessels operating around #Taiwan were detected up until 6 am (UTC+8) today. *—ANI*

Buenos Aires rocked by clashes over Milei reforms

BUENOS AIRES, 13 JUNE

Argentina's Senate has narrowly approved President Javier Milei's controversial economic reform package, with the vote taking place as violent clashes raged between protesters and riot police outside Congress. Demonstrators in Buenos Aires - who say the measures will hurt millions of Argentines - threw petrol bombs and stones, setting cars alight. A number of people were reported injured, with local media describing the scene on Wednesday as a "battlefield". The reforms, aimed at reviving the country's flagging economy, include declaring a state of economic emergency, cutting pensions and watering down labour rights. ***—BBC News***

Indian embassy in China publishes FAQ for students

BEIJING, 13 JUNE

The Indian embassy in Beijing has published a comprehensive FAQ on its website for a large number of Indians studying in China to inform them of the procedures relating to attestation of their documents and degrees obtained from Chinese colleges. The FAQ dealing with a host of questions about necessary documentation of their degrees obtained from the Chinese colleges was released on Wednesday as a large number of Indian students from the 2016, 2017, and 2018 batches are set to return to India in June and July after completing their studies. The FAQ addresses questions including the fees charged by the embassy and Indian consulates in Shanghai and Guangzhou for attestation of these documents, time taken for the attestation of documents including on fast track basis, whether attestation of documents from the Embassy essential for acceptance in India, procedure for verification of documents forwarded by various medical councils in India to the Embassy. ***—PTI***

G7 vote to use Russian assets for Ukraine

President Biden and President Zelenskyy will sign a security deal between US & Ukraine

European Council President Charles Michel, German Chancellor Olaf Scholz, Canada's Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, French president Emmanuel Macron, Italian Premier Giorgia Meloni, US President Joe Biden, Japan's Prime Minister Fumio Kishida, British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak and European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen pose for a family photo at a G7 world leaders summit at Borgo Egnazia, Southern Italy on Thursday ***PHOTO: PTI***

BRINDISI, 13 JUNE

Italian Premier Giorgia Meloni hosts this week's summit of the Group of Seven industrialised nations as the most stable European Union leader. The G7 summit through Saturday is focusing on global conflicts, the spread of artificial intelligence and on Africa issues, with a view in particular to Italy's longstanding concern about uncontrolled migration to Europe and human traffickers.

President Joe Biden and President Volodymyr Zelenskyy will sign a bilateral security agreement between the US and Ukraine on Thursday when they meet on the sidelines of the Group of Seven summit in Italy.

Negotiators for the group have also reached an agreement on how to provide Ukraine with up to $50 billion backed by frozen Russian assets. The international group of wealthy democracies has been discussing ways of using the more than $260 billion in frozen Russian assets, most of which are outside the country, to help Ukraine fight Russian President Vladimir Putin's war machine.

European officials have resisted confiscating the assets, citing legal and financial stability concerns, but the plan would use the interest earned on the assets to help Ukraine's war effort. An official with the French presidency confirmed the agreement Wednesday, saying most of the money would be flowing to Ukraine in the form of a loan from the US government backed by the proceeds of the frozen Russian assets in the European Union. Two other people familiar with the matter confirmed the arrangement. Pope Francis to arrive on the meeting today. *—PTI*

What is G7 & what is its agenda?

The G7 is an informal forum with an annual summit to discuss economic policy and security issues. The members are Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the United Kingdom and the United States. The summit is focusing on global conflicts, the spread of artificial intelligence and on Africa issues, with a view in particular to Italy's longstanding concern about uncontrolled migration to Europe and human traffickers.

9 KILLED IN RUSSIAN AERIAL ATTACKS ON UKRAINE

KYIV, 13 JUNE

Russian forces launched new deadly attacks on Ukraine, killing at least nine people on Wednesday, a day before the leaders of countries that are some of Ukraine's biggest backers were to discuss how to slow Moscow's offensive.

Ukraine said that along with the nine killed, 29 others, including five children, were wounded when Russian missiles hit an apartment block in Kryvyi Rih, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy's hometown. Zelenskyy said the strike has again proven that "Ukraine, together with its partners, must strengthen its air defences."

—PTI

SUNAK TO PUSH FOR 'DECISIVE' SUPPORT TO UKRAINE

BARI, 13 JUNE

British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak is leading calls for "decisive" efforts to support Ukraine "whatever it takes." According to Downing Street, at the summit, Sunak will announce up to GBP 242 million in bilateral assistance to Ukraine, to support immediate humanitarian, energy and stabilisation needs, and lay the foundations for longer-term economic and social recovery and reconstruction. "We must be decisive and creative in our efforts to support Ukraine and end Putin's illegal war at this critical moment," Sunak said in a statement. *—AP*

FISCAL CRISIS

Pak's budgetary allocation for defence falls to 1.7%

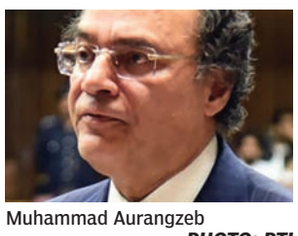
ISLAMABAD, 13 JUNE

Pakistan's budgetary allocation of Rs 2,122 billion for defence for 2024-25 constitutes just 1.7 per cent of the cash-strapped but nuclear-armed nation's GDP, which is the same as the previous year, despite the higher than the Rs 1,804 billion set aside during the outgoing fiscal 2023-24, according to budget documents.

Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb on Wednesday presented a Rs 18,877 billion heavily taxed budget for 2024-25. The finance minister's speech and various budget documents show that Rs 2,122 billion allocated for the next fiscal year is Rs 318 billion higher than Rs 1,804 billion budgeted for the outgoing fiscal year 2023-24, ending on 30 June.

According to the Pakistan Economic Survey 2023-24, which is a key document showing the budget and performance of the economy each year and is released ahead of the budget each year, defence spending as a percentage of the GDP has come down since 2020.

It shows that the defence spending was 2.6 per cent of the GDP in 2020 but it decreased to 2.4 per cent in 2021, and went down further to 2.1 per cent in 2022, followed by 1.9 per cent in 2023 and 1.7 per cent in2024.*—ANI*



Muhammad Aurangzeb
PHOTO: PTI

Pak plans to borrow $23 billion in next fiscal year

Islamabad, 13 June

Pakistan has planned to borrow a minimum of $23 billion in the next fiscal year, including the rollover of a bilateral debt of $12 billion, to finance its development plans and meet its external financing requirement which will keep the country's foreign and economic policies dependent on institutions like IMF. Budget documents showed that Pakistan would borrow at least USD 23.2 billion which did not include any loan from International Monetary Fund. *—PTI*

Houthis launch boat-borne bomb attack

TEL AVIV, 13 JUNE

Yemen's Houthi rebels launched a boat-borne bomb attack against a commercial ship in the Red Sea on Wednesday, authorities said, the latest escalation despite a US-led campaign trying to protect the vital waterway.

The use of a boat loaded with explosives raised the spectre of 2000's USS Cole attack, a suicide assault by al-Qaida on the warship when it was at port in Aden, killing 17 on board. Associated Press journalists saw the Cole in the Red Sea on Wednesday, now taking part in the US campaign while visiting one of her sister ships, the USS Laboon.

Yemen's military spokesman Brig. Gen. Yahya Saree claimed responsibility for the attack, identifying the vessel targeted as the Liberian-flagged, Greek-owned bulk carrier Tutor. He described the attack as using a "drone boat," as well as drones and ballistic missiles.

In a warning to shippers, the British military's United Kingdom Maritime Trade Operations centre described the vessel as being hit in its stern by a small white craft southwest of the Houthi-controlled port city of Hodeida.

The captain "reports the vessel is taking on water, and not under command of the crew," the UKMTO said. He also "reports the vessel was hit for a second time by an unknown airborne projectile."

The US military's Central Command also acknowledged the attack, saying the Tutor "most recently docked in Russia."

"The impact of the (drone boat) caused severe flooding and damage to the engine room," it added. *—AP*

Military spokesman claimed responsibility for the attack***PHOTO: X@AMJ1380***

Yemen's military spokesman Brig. Gen. Yahya Saree claimed responsibility for the attack

At least 37,232 Palestinians have been killed and 85,037 wounded in Israel's attacks on Gaza since 7 October, Gaza's Health Ministry has said. The figures include 30 people killed and 105 wounded in the last 24 hours.

Coca-Cola ad in Bangladesh sparks backlash for 'denying ties with Israel'

DHAKA, 13 JUNE

A 60-second Coca-Cola advertisement in Bangladesh has caused a storm of criticism for the beverage giant over its attempt to distance itself from Israel amid the war on Gaza.

Since 7 October, when Israel's assault on the Gaza Strip began, dozens of companies, including Coca-Cola, have seen a decline in sales in Muslim-majority countries, with consumers calling for a boycott of firms believed to have links with the Israeli government and military.

Local media reports say Coca-Cola sales have declined by about 23 per cent in Bangladesh since the Gaza war. In recent months, the company has intensified its advertising campaign in the country – from full-page newspaper advertisements to prominent placements on news websites.

The company released an advertisement on television and social media, aimed at dispelling the "misinformation" that Coca-Cola is an Israeli product, arguing that the beverage "has been enjoyed for 138 years by people in 190 countries".

The advertisement in Bengali opens on a hot day in a market, with a young man approaching a middle-aged shopkeeper as the latter watches a song from Coke Studio, a popular music series the cola company promotes in several South Asian countries, on his mobile phone. "How are you, Sohail? Should I give you a [bottle of] Coke?" asks the shopkeeper, turning a table fan towards his sweaty customer. The man replies: "No Bablu bhai [brother], I am not drinking this stuff anymore." *—Al Jazeera*

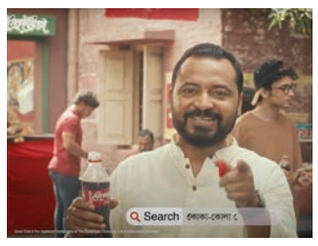


PHOTO: AL JAZEERA (SCREEN GRAB)

Workplace concerns: Ex-SpaceX employees sue Musk

TEXAS, 13 JUNE

Eight former employees of Elon Musk's SpaceX sued the company and Musk on Wednesday, alleging they were "wrongfully fired" for raising concerns about "sexual harassment" and "discrimination" in the workplace, reported the New York Times. The employees were terminated in 2022 after circulating an open letter urging SpaceX executives to condemn Musk's comments on Twitter, later renamed X, which they deemed "a frequent source of distraction and embarrassment." According to the complaint, Musk ordered the terminations upon learning of the letter. *—ANI*

$216 MILLION

EU fines Hungary for flouting asylum law

BRUSSELS, 13 JUNE

The European Union's top court served Hungary a fine of 200 million euros ($216 million) on Thursday for persistently breaking the bloc's asylum rules despite a previous European Court of Justice ruling, plus an additional 1 million euros for every day they fail to comply going forward.

Hungary had not implemented a 2020 ruling from top EU judges in Luxembourg, the ECJ wrote in a press release. "That failure, which consists in deliberately avoiding the application of a common EU policy as a whole, constitutes an unprecedented and extremely serious infringement of EU law."

Hungary's anti-immigrant government has taken a hard line on people entering the country since well over 1 million people entered Europe in 2015, most of them fleeing conflict in Syria. The case concerns changes Hungary made to its asylum system in the wake of that crisis, when some 4,00,000 people passed through Hungary on their way to Western Europe. Hungary built fences protected by razor wire on its southern borders with Serbia and Croatia and a pair of transit zones for holding asylum seekers on its border with Serbia. Those transit zones have since closed.

The measures were part of Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban's increasingly strict anti-immigration policies and the extreme minimisation of Hungary's asylum system. Back in 2020, the ECJ found that Budapest's policies had restricted access to international protection, unlawfully detained asylum applicants and failed to observe their right to stay in Hungary while their application went through the full due process, the court recalled on Thursday.

The transit zones were closed in 2020, shortly after the first ECJ ruling. But the European Commission, which is responsible for monitoring the 27 EU member states' compliance with their shared laws, took the view that Budapest had still not complied and requested the European Court of Justice to fine Hungary, the ECJ said Thursday. *—AP*

PHOTO: X@TV360NIGERIA

- Hungary's government has taken a hard line on people entering the country since well over 1 million people entered Europe in 2015, most of them fleeing conflict in Syria

Macron suspends voting reform in New Caledonia that had sparked violence

PARIS, 13 JUNE

French President Emmanuel Macron announced Wednesday the suspension of controversial voting reforms in New Caledonia, following a spate of deadly unrest in the French Pacific territory.

The reforms, which would have altered voting rights, are feared by the Indigenous Kanak people who say they would have marginalised them further. The issue has caused the worst violence on the archipelago in decades.

The violence flared on 13 May in response to attempts by Macron's government to amend the French Constitution and change voting lists in New Caledonia. France declared a state of emergency in its Pacific territory on 15 May and rushed hundreds of troop reinforcements to help police quell the revolt that included shootings, clashes, looting and arson. Both sides of New Caledonia's bitter divide — Indigenous Kanaks, who want independence and those loyal to France — erected barricades, either to revolt against authorities or to protect their homes and properties. Pro-independence protesters built up barricades of charred vehicles and other debris, turning parts of the capital, Noumea, into no-go zones. "The constitutional bill regarding New Caledonia... I have decided to suspend," Macron said. "We cannot leave ambiguity during this period. It must be suspended to give full strength to dialogue on the ground and the return to order." *—AP*

Emmanuel Macron
PHOTO: WIKIPEDIA

Rupee falls 7 paise to close at 83.55 against US dollar

MUMBAI, 13 JUNE

The rupee consolidated in a narrow range and settled for the day lower by 7 paise at 83.55 (provisional) against the US dollar on Thursday even as both the domestic equity benchmark indices touched all-time high levels. Forex traders said rupee was seen resilient against the dollar, even after volatility witnessed in the dollar index, due to CPI data and US Fed's policy decision. At the inter-bank foreign exchange, the local unit opened at 83.52 and finally settled for the day lower by 7 paise at 83.55 (provisional) against the American currency. On Wednesday, the rupee appreciated 11 paise to close at 83.48 against the US dollar. "Rupee traded sideways in a range of 83.52-83.57 with stability. Even after volatility witnessed in the dollar index, the rupee was seen resilient against the dollar. The dollar index, was trading at 104.81, higher by 0.17 per cent. *—PTI*

Gold slips ₹50; silver tumbles ₹550

NEW DELHI, 13 JUNE

Gold prices slipped Rs 50 to Rs 72,150 per 10 grams in the local market on Thursday in line with weak trends globally, according to HDFC Securities. The precious metal had closed at Rs 72,200 per 10 grams on Wednesday. Silver also tumbled Rs 550 to Rs 90,950 per kg. It had settled at Rs 91,500 per kg in the previous session. "In Delhi markets, spot gold prices (24 carats) are trading at Rs 72,150 per 10 grams, down by Rs 50 from the previous close," Saumil Gandhi, Senior Analyst of Commodities at HDFC Securities, said. Spot gold at Comex was trading at USD 2,313 per ounce. The yellow metal gave up its gains and is trading lower after the US Federal Reserve said that inflation has fallen further toward its target level in recent months. US Fed officials also signalled to cut their interest rate just once this year, Gandhi said. *—PTI*

Zomato creates record for first-aid training programme

NEW DELHI, 13 JUNE

Online food delivery platform Zomato, with the support of more than 4,300 delivery partners, has set a new Guinness World Record for the world's largest on-ground first-aid training programme ever conducted. The training was aimed at equipping delivery partners with essential skills through professional and certified training in medical first-aid and CPR. Former Indian cricketer Anil Kumble was also present at the event, which was held in Mumbai. "In the last few months, we have effectively trained over 30,000-plus delivery partners across 45 cities in medical assistance," Rakesh Ranjan, CEO, Food Delivery at Zomato, said. *—PTI*

Jaypee Infratech appoints Devang Pravin Patel as CFO

NEW DELHI, 13 JUNE

Jaypee Infratech Ltd, which is now being controlled by Mumbai-based Suraksha Group, has appointed Devang Pravin Patel as its Chief Financial Officer (CFO) and will also delist its shares from stock exchanges. The appointment has been made with effect from 8 June. Suraksha Group, which has taken control of Jaypee Infratech ltd (JIL) after approval from the appellate tribunal NCLAT last month, will delist JIL from stock exchanges. The Board of Directors has fixed 21 June as the Record Date for determining the names of the shareholders to whom the exit price will be paid for the purpose of delisting and subsequent extinguishment of issued equity shares of the company. However, the shares issued to Suraksha Group will not be extinguished. Suraksha Group has infused Rs 125 crore equity fund in JIL, as part of its resolution plan to settle banks' dues and complete 20,000 unfinished flats across various projects in Delhi-NCR. *—PTI*

Sensex, Nifty hit peaks as inflation cools off

Nifty rallies 75.95 points to settle at 23,398.90

MUMBAI, 13 JUNE

Equity benchmark indices Sensex and Nifty hit their fresh record levels on Thursday after lower inflation numbers raised hopes of an interest rate cut by the RBI.

Besides, heavy buying in capital goods, consumer durable and industrial stocks also helped the indices, traders said.

Retail inflation continued its downward slide to reach a one-year low of 4.75 per cent in May due to a marginal decline of prices in the food basket and remained within the Reserve Bank's comfort zone of below 6 per cent, according to government data released on Wednesday.

Rising for the second day in a row, the 30-share BSE Sensex jumped 538.89 points or 0.70 to hit its lifetime peak of 77,145.46. It later ended at a fresh record high at 76,810.90; up 204.33 points or 0.27 per cent.

The NSE Nifty rallied 75.95 points or 0.33 per cent to settle at a new closing high of 23,398.90. During the day, it climbed 158.1 points or 0.67 per cent to its record peak of 23,481.05.

The 30-share BSE Sensex jumped 538.89 points **PHOTO: PTI**

Among the 30 Sensex companies, Mahindra & Mahindra, Titan, Larsen & Toubro, IndusInd Bank, Tech Mahindra, UltraTech Cement, Wipro, Tata Consultancy Services, Bajaj Finance and Nestle were the biggest gainers.

On the other hand, Hindustan Unilever, Power Grid, Axis Bank, Bharti Airtel, ICICI Bank and ITC were among the laggards.

In Asian markets, Seoul and Hong Kong settled higher, while Tokyo and Shanghai ended lower.

European markets were trading lower. US markets ended mostly with gains.

"There is good news on the inflation front, both in the US and in India. The takeaway from the inflation numbers is that the disinflation process is well on track. From the market perspective, this is positive news, particularly for banking stocks," said VK Vijayakumar, Chief Investment Strategist, Geojit Financial Services.

The policymakers' forecast for one rate cut was down from a previous forecast of three, likely because inflation, despite having cooled in the past two months, remains persistently elevated. *—PTI*

RS 5L CRORE IN PIPELINE

Growing demand for credit from corp sector: SBI

NEW DELHI, 13 JUNE

State Bank of India Chairman Dinesh Kumar Khara has said there is a growing demand for credit from the corporate sector and loans worth Rs 5 lakh crore are in the pipeline.

Unlike the past few years, when the corporates had sufficient cash surplus on their balance sheet, they have started looking for credit to fund working capital requirements and capacity expansion, he said.

"Now we have come to a stage where they (corporates) have started approaching banks for augmenting their capacity or for working capital purposes. Of course, this I can say with confidence because when we look at our unavailed term loan percentage, it has come down from 25 per cent to 18 per cent and when we see the working capital utilisation, even that has improved," he said.

So, all these are confirming that private sector opportunities are going to be there and SBI will be in a position to create value for the sector, he said.

At the same time, he said, "When we look at our pipeline for the new proposals, that is also quite healthy, somewhere around Rs 5 trillion or so".

Khara said that gross NPA in the whole retail portfolio is 0.7% **PHOTO: PTI**

- With regard to Retail Agriculture and MSME (RAM) lending, Khara said, SBI can grow the book at 16 per cent during this year as well despite the high interest rate

With regard to Retail Agriculture and MSME (RAM) lending, Khara said, SBI can grow the book at 16 per cent during this year as well despite the high interest rate.

SBI reported a 16 per cent growth rate in RAM to about Rs 21 lakh crore during FY24.

Emphasising that the bank has a very elaborate process of assessing the risk and underwriting RAM, he said that the current book looks pretty good.

Asserting that there is no stress on housing and vehicle loans, Khara said, the gross NPA in the whole retail portfolio is 0.7 per cent.

"It is nothing but a reflection of our underwriting standards and our ability to pick the right quality business. We are seeing adequate opportunities for us to underwrite mortgage and car loans. So I think we have not seen any challenge," he added. *—PTI*

4TH EXTENSION

The insolvency tribunal had granted an extension of 60 days on 8 April, which ended on 3 June **PHOTO: PTI**

NCLT gives 60 days to Go First to complete insolvency

NEW DELHI, 13 JUNE

The National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT) has granted an extension of 60 days to the grounded air carrier Go First for completing the insolvency process.

This is the fourth extension for Go First to complete the Corporate Insolvency Resolution Process (CIRP), which is struggling to find a buyer.

Earlier, the insolvency tribunal had granted an extension of 60 days on 8 April, which ended on 3 June, 2024.

Following this latest extension, the CIRP of GO First will come to an end on 3 August, 2024.

While granting the extension, the Delhi-based NCLT bench said: "This is the final extension". The two-member bench also came down heavily on the Resolution Professional for seeking an extension.

Counsel appearing for the RP informed the tribunal that they were seeking this extension owing to an extraordinary situation post the Delhi High Court judgment asking DGCA to deregister all of its 54 aircraft.

According to the RP, those who have shown interest in buying the airline have revised their offers and the lenders are yet to consider them, hence the 60-day extension is needed.

On 13 February, the NCLT extended the deadline to complete CIRP to 4 April. This was after the tribunal on 23 November last year granted an extension of 90 days, which ended on 4 February.

The Insolvency & Bankruptcy Code mandates completion of CIRP within 330 days, which includes the time taken during litigations. As per Section 12(1) of the Code, CIRP should be completed within 180 days.

However, the maximum time within which CIRP must be mandatorily completed, including any extension or litigation period, is 330 days, failing which a corporate debtor is sent for liquidation. *—PTI*

Sparsh CCTV sets record with security certification

MUMBAI, 13 JUNE

Sparsh CCTV, a leading player in the field of video surveillance and security solutions, proudly announces that it has become the first company across the globe to get a cyber-security certification IoTSCS certification for IoT product (CCTV Camera) from Standardisation Testing and Quality Certification (STQC).

The key components of these requirements are , Detailed Testing Parameters: These parameters are defined to guarantee that both the hardware and software of CCTV systems are secure. Security Testing Report: It is mandatory for the security testing of CCTV and Video Surveillance Systems to be conducted by the Standardization Testing and Quality Certification Directorate. Secure Process Conformance: This requirement involves validating that the components used in the CCTV systems are sourced through a trusted value chain. *—PTI*

Musk says Tesla investors backing pay deal

CALIFORNIA, 13 JUNE

Tesla boss Elon Musk says shareholder votes on a record-breaking payout to the multi-billionaire and a plan to move the firm's legal headquarters to Texas are "currently passing by wide margins".

Tesla shareholders have been voting on several proposals, including one that could confirm a pay deal for Musk, that was worth USD 56 billion when it was first agreed in 2018.

The company is due to make an official announcement on the result of the vote at a meeting on Thursday.

In a post on X, Musk thanked his supporters.

However, legal experts say it is not clear if a court that blocked the deal will accept the re-vote, which is not binding, and allow the company to restore the pay package.

Earlier this year, a Delaware judge voided the compensation deal after a small investor sued.

The judge ruled the sum was "unfair" and the process for determining the package, by a board dominated by Musk, was "deeply flawed".

PHOTO: X / @ELONMUSK

Tesla called the decision "fundamentally unfair, and inconsistent with the will of the stockholders".

The company then submitted the deal to another vote - and asked its shareholders to back a plan to reincorporate the company outside the state of Delaware.

The board has said Musk deserves the package because Tesla achieved its ambitious targets under his leadership and that it is necessary to ensure he remains dedicated to the company.

Tesla executives also expressed support for the package in social media posts, saying that Mr Musk is crucial to the company's success.

—BBC News

Indian ship recyclers' revenue seen rising 15% this fiscal: Crisil

NEW DELHI, 13 JUNE

The Indian ship recycling industry will see revenue growth of 15 per cent this fiscal after two years of decline, Crisil ratings said on Thursday.

It said the growth will be supported by the increased availability of ageing vessels for recycling due to addition of new vessel capacity globally and higher competitiveness of Indian ship recyclers compared to key rival nations -- Bangladesh and Pakistan.

PHOTO: PTI

"The Indian ship recycling industry will see revenue growth of 15 per cent this fiscal after two years of decline -- 22 per cent in fiscal 2024 and 8.5 per cent in fiscal 2023," it said. *—PTI*

INDIA'S PALM OIL IMPORTS JUMP 74%

NEW DELHI, 13 JUNE

India's palm oil imports surged 74 per cent to 7,63,300 tonnes in May this year from 4,39,173 tonnes in the year-ago period, as the world's largest vegetable oil buyer stocked up the commodity to meet rising domestic demand, industry body Solvent Extractors Association said.

The total vegetable oil imports rose to 15.29 lakh tonnes in May this year from 10.58 lakh tonnes in May 2023, it added. *—PTI*

Market share of 5 cement makers to rise to 55% by 2025

NEW DELHI, 13 JUNE

Top five domestic cement manufacturers could expand their market share to up to 55 per cent by March 2025, through organic and inorganic expansions, leading to further consolidation, said a report from rating agency ICRA.

Helped by a healthy demand prospect, large companies operating in the cement sector are looking to increase their capacity and maintain market share, it said.

"Except the ACC and Ambuja acquisitions by the Adani Group, other mergers and acquisitions (M&As) were largely owing to the cash flow-starved nature of the acquired entity or the group's financial stress," it said.

According to data from the Cement Manufacturers Association, the country has installed a cement capacity of 541 Metric Tonnes (MT).

PHOTO: PTI

The cement market is led by Aditya Birla group firm UltraTech Cement Ltd. This is followed by Adani Group firm Adani Cement, which owns Ambuja Cement and its subsidiaries ACC Ltd, which has the capacity to produce 77.4 million tonnes of cement annually. *—PTI*

NOKIA, ERICSSON TO PICK RS 2,458 CR STAKE IN VODAFONE

NEW DELHI, 13 JUNE

Debt-ridden telecom operator Vodafone Idea will allocate shares worth Rs 2,458 crore to vendors Nokia India and Ericsson India to clear their partial dues, a regulatory filing said on Thursday.

The board of Vodafone Idea Ltd (VIL) has cleared allotment of shares on preferential basis at about 35 per cent higher price compared to the follow-on offer price of the company, and comes with a lock-in of 6 months.

Nokia and Ericsson will participate for up to Rs 1,520 crore and Rs 938 crore respectively, subject to approval by VIL shareholders at the EGM to be held on 10 July, 2024, the telco said in a release. *—PTI*

PLAYING SAVIOUR

AI helps in growing climate resilient seeds

CALIFORNIA, 13 JUNE

Like the bosses of many food companies, Jeremy Bunch is worried about the impact of climate change on his business.

"Weather and the climate are maybe the number one risk to our company," says the boss of US flour firm Shepherd's Grain.

Based in Idaho, the business sources wheat from farmers across the US Pacific northwest. As weather patterns become more unpredictable, Mr Bunch says: "I need to have a plan B, and plan C, in case plan A fails."

Bunch's company is now using an AI-powered software system called ClimateAi.

Using current and past data, such as from satellite imagery and temperature and rainfall readings, and combining that with future projections, ClimateAi aims to give farmers the most accurate possible, locally-tailored weather forecasts, from one hour to six months ahead. It then advises on exactly when to plant and harvest particular crops, and predicts their yields.

ClimateAi aims to give farmers the most accurate possible weather forecasts **PHOTO: BBC/SHEPHERD'S GRAIN**

One of the biggest problems facing the seed industry is how to launch climate resilient seeds to market faster and cheaper, says Himanshu Gupta, chief executive of San Francisco-based ClimateAi. Last year, a study published in scientific journal Nature warned of the potentially dire consequences of numerous crop failures happening at the same time around the world, as a result of the impact of climate change.

In the city of Arusha in Tanzania, David Guerena, agricultural scientist is leading a project called Artemis.

Funded by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, this is using AI to help breed more resilient crops. Specifically the AI is helping speed up work called phenotyping. *—BBC News*

GST council to take up taxation issues on 22 June

NEW DELHI, 13 JUNE

The GST Council, chaired by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, will meet after a gap of eight months on 22 June, and is likely to review the implementation of 28 per cent GST on the online gaming sector. "The 53rd meeting of the GST Council will be held on 22nd June, 2024 at New Delhi," the GST Council Secretariat said in a post on X.

The 52nd meeting of the GST Council, which comprises finance ministers of all states and UTs, was held on 7 October, 2023. The agenda for the 53rd meeting is yet to be circulated amongst the Council members. This would be the first Council meeting after Lok Sabha elections.

The GST Council is likely to review the decision to levy 28 per cent GST on full value of bets for online gaming companies which came into effect from 1 October, 2023.

Nirmala Sitharaman **PHOTO: PTI**

In its meetings in July and August, the GST Council had approved amendments to the law to include online gaming, casinos and horse racing as taxable actionable claims, and clarified that such supplies would attract 28 per cent tax on full bet value. *—PTI*

Get ready for the biggest Europe league carnival

High-profile players like Cristiano Ronaldo & Toni Kroos are expected to dominate the limelight

Cristiano Ronaldo, Kylian Mbappe, Kevin De Bruyne and Toni Kroos

PHOTO: X /AGENCIES

LONDON, 13 JUNE

Euro 2024 kicks off in Germany when the hosts take on Scotland at Munich's Allianz Arena in Group A on 14 June, Friday. High-profile players and breakout stars from the best leagues in the world will compete in the month-long Union of European Football Associations (UEFA) championship.

Cristiano Ronaldo(Portugal) Portugal is Ronaldo's side, there's no doubt about that. He's the face of the team, but if they're to go all the way and win Euro 2024 as some are predicting, it's likely Fernandes who will be churning out quality performances every single time he takes to the pitch. Ronaldo's ability to chalk up goal contributions is unearthly.

Kylian Mbappe (France) Known for his mesmerising dribbling, speed and clinical finishing, Kylian Mbappe has been one of the premier players on an awesome France national team in recent years. The 25-year-old, who will wear the captain's armband at the Euros, heads into the tournament on the back of a terrific final season with Paris Saint-Germain, scoring a whopping 44 goals in all competitions.

Kevin De Bruyne (Belgium) Playmaker Kevin De Bruyne was the midfield maestro behind Manchester City's victorious 2023-24 English Premier League (EPL) title charge, orchestrating the Sky Blues' charge to their fourth straight EPL title.

Jude Bellingham (England) Jude Bellingham's stunning debut season at Spanish mega club Real Madrid has rapidly turned the attacking English midfielder into one of the hottest commodities in European football.
Bellingham took the Spanish giants by storm with 18 league goals in the 2023-24 season.

Phil Foden (England) Phil Foden's impressive haul of 19 goals and eight assists for Manchester City earned him the Player of the Season award, as his side clinched a record fourth successive English Premier League title.
The 23-year-old impressed in an attacking midfield position for City and should Gareth Southgate play him in the same position instead of out wide, Foden could be the Three Lions' danger-man.

Florian Wirtz (Germany) Florian Wirtz was named the Bundesliga's Player of the Year for his key role in Xabi Alonso's revolutionary 2023-24 title-winning team at Bayer Leverkusen, as the attacking midfielder racked up the joint second-most assists (11) and scored an equal number of goals. Toni Kroos is also playing his last UEFA EURO league.

Xavi Simons (Netherlands) Xavi Simons is a product of Barcelona's La Masia Academy and his game boasts admirable traits of 'Total Football' – a tactical system common in Dutch and Spanish football in which any outfield player can take over the role of any other player – allowing the 21-year-old to impact a game from a multitude of positions.

Rasmus Hojlund (Denmark) Having joined Manchester United as their most expensive signing in the summer of 2023, Rasmus Hojlund fully justified his price tag, scoring 10 English Premier League goals and at just 21 years old, becoming the youngest player to reach double-figure goals in the 2023-24 EPL season.

—Al Jazeera

T20 WORLD CUP

Afghanistan and Papua New Guinea players celebrate

PHOTO: X / @T20WORLDCUP

All-round Afghans eye win over PNG Super 8 entry

TAROUBA, 13 JUNE

Afghanistan will eye another all-around effort to crush an inexperienced Papua New Guinea here and enter the Super Eights of the T20 World Cup, and the result will have another underlying effect knock out New Zealand.

The win will carry Rashid Khan's side to Super Eight from Group 'C' alongside the West Indies, who have qualified on Thursday with a win over New Zealand.

It will also mean curtains for the 2021 finalists New Zealand who have lost two out of two.

Apart from Gurbaz, the experienced Ibrahim Zadran too has contributed well to Afghanistan's totals, making 114 runs with a highest of 70.

In bowling, pacer Farooqi has made a fine combination with Rashid, who has so far taken six wickets from two matches.

The PNG might be a spirited side, but it looks way beyond their abilities to overcome a formidable Afghanistan.
Match starts at 6 AM IST (Friday).

Pak worry over USA-Ireland clash

In a strange scenario, a non-playing Pakistan will be keener on the result of the USA and Ireland Group A match at Lauderhill, Florida on Friday.

A win for the USA, currently second in this group with four points, will put an end to the World Cup campaign of Pakistan, who have two points from three matches.

Of course, it will also take the co-hosts into the Super Eight from this group along with India. Ireland is a competitive side with experienced players in their ranks, but they look woefully out of sync here and the task might be heavier against the US, who are playing some very good T20 cricket at the moment.

They will be keeping an eye on the fitness of skipper Monank Patel, who missed the match against India on Wednesday with a left shoulder injury.

There is also a strong rain threat to the match as per weather predictions, and even a washout can end the campaign of Pakistan.

It will take the USA to five points and beyond the reach of Pakistan, who can now log a maximum of four points.

England face Oman

England will look to resuscitate their fast-sinking title defense with a win over inexperienced but capable Oman in their T20 World Cup Group B match.

The situation is so grim that England needs to win both their remaining matches by a good margin to equal Scotland on five points, and also hope that the latter lose badly against the Antipodeans.
The match starts: at 12.30 AM IST (Friday).

—PTI

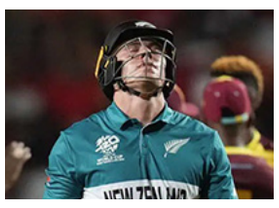


PHOTO: PTI

West Indies knock out NZ, qualify for Super Eights

TAROUBA, 13 JUNE

West Indies knocked former runners-up and last edition's semifinalist New Zealand out of the T20 World Cup with a 13-run victory in their Group C match here. The win, their third on the trot, also secured tournament co-hosts West Indies' Super Eight berth, two years after they had failed to make the main round of the T20 World Cup in Australia. Sherfane Rutherford came up with the innings of his life, hitting six sixes and two fours in his 39-ball unbeaten 68 to lift West Indies to 149 for 9 from 76 for 7 in 12.3 overs. In reply, West Indies restricted the Kiwis to 136 for 9 in 19 overs. Rutherford's fellow Guyanese left-arm spinner Gudakesh Motie returned with splendid figures of 3/25. But pacer Alzarri Joseph was the wrecker-in-chief, grabbing 4 for 19. Brief Scores: West Indies: 149 for 9 in 20 overs (Sherfane Rutherford 68 not out; Trent Boult 3/16, Tim Southee 2/21, Lockie Ferguson 2/27). New Zealand: 136 for 9 in 20 overs (Glenn Phillips 40; Alzarri Joseph 4/19.*—AP*

PHOTO: PTI

Hitaashee set for Singapore Ladies Masters

SINGAPORE, 13 JUNE

After losing a major part of the 2023 season to a recurrent back injury, promising teenager Hitaashee Bakshi wants to make up for the lost time by playing as many tournaments as possible and her next stop would be Singapore Ladies Masters which will be her fifth event in under eight weeks. The 19-year-old Hitaashee is one of the three Indians who will be seen in action this week. The others are Seher Atwal, a winner on her domestic Tour in India, and promising amateur Mahreen Bhatia, 16, but who has won the Faldo Series events in Dubai and Vietnam, and medals at the US Kids in European and World Championships.*—AP*

Nassau Stadium home to tense T20 World Cup matches set for demolition

NEW YORK, 13 JUNE

The makeshift Nassau County cricket ground, which was built specifically for the T20 World Cup, is all set to be demolished after the New York leg of the event came to an end with India's seven-wicket victory over co-hosts USA here.
Built-in just over 100 days, the stadium became notorious for its challenging drop-in pitches, which were sourced from Adelaide. The massive structure sat on the edge of the 930-acre Eisenhower Park in Long Island here.
The stadium had 10 drop-in pitches, four for the main ground and six for the adjacent training facility in Cantiague Park.
"After the last match is held at East Meadow on June 12, the stadium will be dismantled, the parts shipped back to Las Vegas and another golf event, and Eisenhower Park will return to normal, but with a world-class cricket pitch left behind," a New York Times report had stated a few days ago. The stadium that "almost popped up overnight" will be dismantled over six weeks.

PHOTO: PTI

—PTI

SELECTION FOR OLYMPICS

Quota belongs to country, not to athlete: Bindra

MUMBAI, 13 JUNE

Olympics gold winner Abhinav Bindra on Thursday said promising shooter Rudrankksh Patil was unfortunate to miss the flight to the Paris Games, but emphasized that the quota belongs to the country and not to one athlete.

Patil, who had bagged a 10m air rifle quota for the Paris Olympics, could not find a place in the 15-member Indian squad for the quadrennial extravaganza after finishing behind Sandeep Singh and Arjun Babuta in the selection trials organized by the National Rifle Association of India (NRAI).

As per the Olympic guidelines, a country can only send the top two shooters in one event from trials to the Games.

Abhinav Bindra PHOTO: PTI

"See, it's not a call. It's a matter of selection. There's a due process laid out and they followed the process," Bindra told the media here on the sidelines of the IISM Convocation Ceremony 2024.

"You'll ask the same question in case the process was not followed. But a fair process was put out for everybody, and it was followed," Bindra added.

"Well, that is the process laid down for the country. Many countries follow that process. It's not just that India is following that process. The quota doesn't belong to an athlete per se. It belongs to the country and a process was put out well in advance," he said.

Bindra backed the method that NRAI followed and said a clear system should be followed. "I think credit the Federation for following the process. I think, as athletes, what do we need? We need a clear system. We need a clear process and we need that clear system and policies followed," he said.

—PTI

Mansukh Mandaviya PHOTO: PTI

New Sports Min Mandaviya meets IOA Chief Usha

NEW DELHI, 13 JUNE V

Barely a day after taking charge, new Sports Minister Mansukh Mandaviya on Thursday took stock of India's preparation for this year's Olympic Games during a meeting with IOA President PT Usha, where the latter exuded confidence about 100-plus athletes contingent from the country in Paris. Mandaviya, who took over the charge of the sports ministry from Anurag Thakur on Tuesday, met Indian Olympic Association top brass, including Usha at the IOA Bhawan here on Thursday.

The Paris Olympics 2024 begins on 26 July. During the more-than-hour-long meeting, which was also attended by new Minister of State for Sports, Raksha Khadse, Sports Secretary Sujata Chaturvedi, Sports Authority of India Director General Sandip Pradhan among others, Mandaviya was briefed about the country's preparation for Paris Games.

"I visited the IOA officials for the first time today and they briefed me about India's preparation for the Paris Olympics.

—PTI

Prannoy, Verma enter quarters

SYDNEY, 13 JUNE

Indian shuttlers HS Prannoy and Sameer Verma progressed to the men's singles quarterfinals of the Australian Open with contrasting victories over their respective opponents here on Thursday.

While fifth seed Prannoy, a former world No.1, took just 46 minutes to get the better of Misha Zilberman of Israel 21-17 21-15 in the round of 16, Verma had to toil hard for one hour and two minutes to upset eighth seed Loh Kean Yew of Singapore 21-14 14-21 21-19.

Prannoy will be up against second seed Kodai Naroaka of Japan in the next round, while Verma will take on Chinese Taipei's Chun-Yi Lin on Friday. However, it was curtains for Kiran George in the men's singles event as he lost 20-22 6-21 against seventh seed Kenta Nishimoto of Japan.

HS Prannoy PHOTO: PTI

Among the Indian women shuttlers, eighth seed Aakarshi Kashyap beat Australia's Kai Qi Bernice Teoh 21-16 21-13 to progress to the quarterfinals, where she will be playing third seed Yu Po Pai of Chinese Taipei.

But the tournament ended for Anupama Upadhyaya and Malvika Bansod in the women's singles second round.

While Anupama lost 11-21 18-21 against sixth seed Putri Kusuma Wardani of Indonesia, Malvika was shown the door by another Indonesian, eighth seed Ester Nurumi Tri Wardoyo 17-21 21-23. It was also the end of the road for Panda sisters, Rutaparna and Swetaparna, in the women's doubles. The seventh-seeded India pair was shocked 5-21 9-21 by the Malaysian combination of Pei Jing Lai and Chiew Sien Lim.

—PTI

PHOTO: X / @EURO2024

Orange facelift for Euro 2024

THE HAGUE, 13 JUNE

The fluttering of 64 kilometers (40 miles) of orange bunting and a hammer driving a nail into a wall to hold up orange tarps are the sounds of a Dutch summer of soccer in a normally drab suburban street in The Hague.

The Marktweg is one of several streets in the Netherlands that get an all-encompassing orange facelift during European Championships and World Cups when the national team known as Oranje after the Dutch royal family and the color of their shirts are looking to add to the Euro it won 36 years ago.

—AP

WIMBLEDON CHAMPIONSHIP

Prize money increases to $50 million

WIMBLEDON, 13 JUNE

Wimbledon's total prize money fund will rise to a record 50 million pounds (about $64 million), with the singles champion each earning 2.7 million pounds ($3.45 million), All England Club officials announced Thursday at the annual spring briefing.

The total amount is 5.3 million pounds ($6.8 million) more than last year, an increase of 11.9% — and exactly twice the 25 million pounds ($32 million at the current exchange rate) handed out to competitors at the grass-court Grand Slam tournament 10 years ago.

Ticket demand "has never been greater" than it was this year, said Deborah Jevans, the new chair of the All England Club.

Singles champion each earning 2.7M pounds PHOTO: X / @WIMBLEDON

The winners' checks for 2024 represent a jump of 350,000 pounds each (nearly $450,000), a 14.9% jump.

Players who lose in the first round of singles will get 60,000 pounds (about $76,000) each, up from 55,000 ($70,000) in 2023. The prizes for the qualifying event will go up 14.9% to 4.8 million pounds (about $6 million).

- Wimbledon's total prize money fund will rise to a record 50 million pounds (about $64 million), with the singles champion each earning 2.7 million pounds ($3.45 million), All England Club officials announced Thursday at the annual spring briefing.

Other topics addressed by Jevans and Sally Bolton, the club's chief executive:

The club has been in contact with other Grand Slam hosts about the possibility of creating a domestic violence policy. "That's something that the sport would want to do on a unified basis," Bolton said about forming a policy. *—AP*

3-star GP event: Shruti logs historic victory

NEW DELHI, 13 JUNE

Veteran Shruti Vora has become the first Indian rider to win a three-star Grand Prix event, the Equestrian Federation of India (EFI) announced on Thursday.

Shruti scored 67.761 points in the CDI-3 event held in Lipica, Slovenia, from 7-9 June. The Indian finished ahead of Moldova's Tatiana Antonenco (Aachen), who scored 66.522.

Austria's Juliane Jerich (Quarter Girl) completed the top 3 with a score of 66.087. Shruti also had a commendable show in the Grad Prix Special, which was also held at the same venue simultaneously.

She finished second behind the Antonenco-Aachen combo with a score of 66.085."I am extremely delighted with the result. I have worked hard and the victory is indeed satisfying. The win has come in an Olympic year and that makes it significant."The fact that I am the first rider from the country to win a three-star event makes it a special achievement.

Shruti Vora PHOTO: PTI

I will keep working hard to bring laurels for my country," Shruti was quoted as saying in an EFI release.

—PTI